THE ART OF DIVINE CONTENTMENT.

BY

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PASTOR OF ST. STEPHEN'S, WALBROOK, LONDON,
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1653.

REVISED AND CORRECTED,

BY

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THE FIFTEENTH EDITION.

GODLINESS, WITH CONTENTMENT, IS GREAT GAIN, 1 Tim. vi. 6.

HAVING FOOD AND RAIMENT, LET US BE THEREWITH CONTENT. v. 8.

LONDON:

Printed for the EDITOR.—Sold by HARRISON and Co. No. 18, Paternoster Row; T. BENNETT, No. 7, Plough Court, Fetter Lane; M. GURNEY, No. 128, Holborn Hill; T. MASSEY, No. 18, Snow Hill; and D. BATTISCOMB, in Hemlock Court, Carey Street.

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PREFACE.

CHRISTIAN READER,

THE following Treatiſe contains many excellent truths, on a ſubject in which the Apoſtle had made great proficiency, and which is left on record for our imitation, that we might be followers of them who, through faith and patience, now inherit the promiſes. It is this that our Author has enforced, in a plain and an evangelical manner; and it's acceptance in the world evidently appears from the number of editions it has already paſſed through: and it being almoſt buried in oblivion*, induced me to reviſe and correct it, and preſent it to publick view; hoping that it may be made uſeful, in God's hands, in checking the diſcontent of the heart, which is too often ready to call in queſtion the dealings of Jehovah; and that we, on the other hand, may enjoy that compoſure of mind and reſignation to the Divine Will

* Firſt publiſhed in 1653, and the 14th Edition ſo long ſince as 1676.

which Aaron, Eli, Job, and others, were bleſſed with, when they acknowledged and ſubmitted to the righteous dealings of God. Should the Lord make uſe of it, in any meaſure, to check the prevalence of ſuch an epidemical ſin—as our Author ſtiles it in his Preface—my end will be fully anſwered; and God ſhall have all the glory, into whoſe hands I commend it and it's readers.

That it may be thus owned of God, though ſent forth at this time by an unworthy inſtrument, is the earneſt prayer of your

Willing Servant in the Goſpel of JESUS,

20 MA 59

CROWLE, LINCOLNSHIRE,
MAY 17, 1793. T. BENNETT.

THE

THE

EPISTLE

TO THE

READER.

CHRISTIAN READER,

HAVING ſeriouſly conſidered the great diſhonour done to Almighty God, as well as the prejudice which doth ariſe to our own ſelves, by the ſin of diſcontent—a catholick and epidemical ſin—it did at firſt put me upon the ſtudy of this ſubject. Nor is it incongruous to handle this next in order to the *Chriſtian Charter*. I ſhewed you *there* the great things which a believer hath in reverſion—*Things to come are his*. And here behold a Chriſtian's holy and gracious deportment in this life, which diſcovers itſelf in nothing more eminently than in *Contentment*. Diſcontent is to the ſoul, as a diſeaſe to the body; it puts out of temper, and doth much hinder it's regular and ſublime motions heaven-ward. Diſcontent is hereditary; and no doubt but it is much augmented by the many ſad eclipſes and changes that have fallen out of late in the

body politick: yet thy diſeaſe is not to be pleaded for, becauſe natural; but to be reſiſted, becauſe ſinful. That which ſhould make us out of love with this ſullen diſtemper, is the contemplating the beautiful Queen of *Contentment*. For my part, I know not any ornament in religion that doth more beſpangle a Chriſtian, or glitter in the eye of God and man, than this of contentment; nor, certainly, is there any thing wherein all the Chriſtian virtues do work more harmoniouſly, or ſhine more tranſparently, than in this orb. Every grace doth act it's part here, and help to keep the ſoul in it's proper frame. This is the true philoſopher's ſtone, which turns all into gold—this is the curious enamel and embroidery of the heart, which makes Chriſt's ſpouſe all *glorious* within. How ſhould every Chriſtian be ambitious to wear ſuch a ſparkling diamond! If there be a bleſſed life before we come at heaven, it is the contented life. And why not contented? *Why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen?* Gen. iv. 6. Man, of all creatures, hath the leaſt cauſe to be diſcontented. Canſt thou deſerve any thing from God? Doth he owe thee any thing? What, if the ſcene turn, and God puts thee under the *black-rod?* Whereas he uſeth a rod, he might uſe a ſcorpion; he might as well damn thee, as whip thee. Why, then, art thou ſo querulous? Why doſt thou

thou give way to this irrational and unthankful ſin of diſcontent? The good Lord humble his own people from nouriſhing ſuch a viper in their breaſt, as doth not only cut out the bowels of their comfort, but ſpits venom in the face of God himſelf. Oh, Chriſtian! who art overſpread with this *fretting leproſy*, thou carrieſt the *man of ſin* about thee; for thou ſetteſt thyſelf above God, as if thou wert wiſer than he, and wouldſt ſaucily preſcribe him what condition is beſt for thee. O this *devil of diſcontent!* which whomſoever it poſſeſſeth, it makes his heart a little hell. I know there will not be perfect contentment here in this life. Perfect pleaſure is only at *God's right hand*; yet we may begin here to tune our inſtrument, before we play the ſweet leſſon of contentment exactly in heaven. I ſhould be glad if this little piece might be like Moſes his caſting the tree into the waters, (*Exod.* xv. 25.) to make the uncouth bitter condition of life more ſweet and pleaſant to drink of. I have once more adventured into publick. This piece I acknowledge to be but a home-ſpun one; ſome better hand might have made a more curious draught: but, having preached upon the ſubject, I was earneſtly ſolicited by ſome of my hearers to publiſh it; and although it is not dreſſed in that rich attire of eloquence as it might, yet I am not about poetry or oratory, but di-

vinity. Nor is this intended for fancy, but practice. If I may herein do any ſervice, or caſt but a mite into the treaſury of the Church's grace, I have my deſire. The end of our living is to live to God, and to lift up his name in the world. The Lord add an effectual bleſſing to this work, and faſten it as a nail in a ſure place. He of his mercy make it as ſpiritual phyſick, to purge the ill-humour of diſcontent out of our hearts, that ſo a crown of honour may be ſet upon the head of Religion, and the cryſtal ſtreams of Joy and Peace may ever run in our ſouls—Which is the prayer of him who is deſirous to be a faithful orator for thee at the Throne of Grace.

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From my Study, at St. Stephen's, Walbrook, May 3, 1653.

THOMAS WATSON.

TO

TO THE

CHRISTIAN READER.

A Word ſpoken in due ſeaſon, how good is it! *Prov.* xv. 13. *As God* giveth to his creatures their meat in ſeaſon, (*Pſal.* civ. 27.) ſo his faithful ſtewards provide for his houſhold their portion of meat in due ſeaſon, *Luke* ii. 42. And as it is with corporal food, the ſeaſon addeth much both to the value and uſefulneſs thereof: in like manner it is with food ſpiritual. In this regard, the brokenneſs of theſe times—wherein the boſoms of moſt people are filled with diſquietude, and their mouths with murmurings—may well render this Treatiſe more acceptable. The ſeas are not ſo ſtormy as men's ſpirits are tempeſtuous, toſſed to and fro with diſcontent, *Eccleſ.* iii. 11. And now the Lord, who maketh every thing beautiful in his time, hath moſt ſeaſonably put into thy hand a profitable diſcourſe to calm unquiet hearts. Adam, in Paradiſe, daſhed upon the rock of diſcontent—which ſome

divines conceive was his firſt ſin. This, with many inſtances more in Scripture, together with our own ſad experience, doth both ſpeak our danger and call for caution. Now godlineſs is the only ſovereign antidote againſt this ſpreading diſeaſe; and God's grace alone, being ſettled and exerciſed in the heart, can cauſe ſteadineſs in ſtormy times, *Heb.* xiii. 9. Whereas contentment ariſeth either from the fruition of all comforts, or from a not deſiring of ſome which we have not. True piety doth put a Chriſtian into ſuch a condition: hereby we both poſſeſs God, and are taught how to improve Him who is the only ſatisfying everlaſting Portion of his people, (*Pſal.* xvi. 25, 26. *Matt.* viii. 20. *Pſal.* lxxiii. 5, 6.) Herein Chriſt, though poor in this world, greatly rejoiced. "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance: the lines are fallen unto me in pleaſant places. Yea, I have a goodly heritage." Upon this account, alſo, Jacob ſaid—*I have nothing*; (*Gen.* xxxiii. 11.) or, as it is in the original, *I have all.* God the Father, and Chriſt his Son, had ſweet ſatisfaction in each other, when there was no other being, *Prov.* viii. 30, 31. Therefore ſuch who poſſeſs and improve God, through Chriſt, cannot poſſibly be diſſatisfied. The Almighty is the God of *all grace*, (1 Pet. v. 20.) of *all comforts*, (2 Cor. i. 4.) and of *ſalvation*;

tion; (*Pſal.* lxviii. 20.)—in which reſpect neither deficiencies or diſappointments, loſſes or croſſes, can cauſe diſquieting diſcontent in that boſom where Faith is commander in chief. The Prophet Habakkuk rejoiced in the "God of his ſalvation, when the peſtilence went before him," (*Heb.* iii. 5. 17. 11.) "and burning coals came forth of his feet;" and when he ſuppoſed all creature-ſuccours, both for delight and neceſſity, to be quite removed. This, this is the life which Chriſtians ſhould endeavour, and may attain by the vigorous regular actings of precious faith. This is the gain of contentment, which comes in by godlineſs, when providences are black and likely to be bloody. Now, "the juſt ſhall live by his faith," *Hab.* ii. 4. *Heb.* x. 31. That ſpeech of the learned Mr. Gataker is weighty, and well worth remarking—"A contented mind argues a religious heart; and a diſcontented mind argues an irreligious heart." This likewiſe was an holy breathing of Rev. Dr. Hall in his Meditations—"I have ſomewhat of the beſt things; I will with thankfulneſs enjoy them, and will want the reſt with contentment." By attaining and maintaining this frame of heart, we might have much of heaven on this ſide heaven. Holy contentment maketh them truly rich, whom the oppreſſing world maketh very poor. Hereby our ſweeteſt morſels ſhall be well ſeaſoned, and our bittereſt

potions well ſweetened, *Prov.* xvii. 1. Had we learned to enjoy contentment in Jehovah, who is immutable and all-ſufficient, this heavenly frame of ſpirit ſhould never periſh or change in the midſt of the moſt amazing alterations in Church and State with which his Majeſty is pleaſed to exerciſe us: whereas, becauſe we live alone upon ſublunaries, therefore we are apt with Nabal to die upon the neſt, (1 *Sam.* xxv. 37.) through dejectedneſs, upon the approach of imagined danger. When God ſeeth cauſe to cut us ſhort of many creature accommodations, faith will moderate our deſires after them; aſſuring the ſoul, that nothing is withdrawn or with-held which might be really advantageous: and doubtleſs it is a great piece of happineſs upon earth, not to long after that which the Lord is pleaſed to deny. Indeed, men act rather like Heathens than Chriſtians, when they fret upon ſome particular inferior diſappointments, notwithſtanding God's liberality laid forth upon them in many other reſpects: as Alexander, the monarch of the world, was diſcontented, becauſe ivy would not grow in his gardens at Babylon. Diogenes, the Cynick, was herein more wiſe; who, finding a mouſe in his ſatchel, ſaid, He ſaw that himſelf was not ſo poor, but ſome were glad of his leavings. Oh, how might we, if we had hearts to improve higher providences, rock our peeviſh

peeviſh ſpirits quiet by much ſtronger argument! Let us then lay before our eyes the practices of pious men, recorded in Scripture for our imitation, as Jacob, Agur, Paul, &c. (*Gen.* xxviii. 20. *Prov.* xxx. 8. 1 *Tim.* vi. 7.) and let us charge home upon our conſciences divine exhortations, backed with ſtrong reaſons, and encouraged with ſweet promiſes. It was the grave counſel of holy Greenham—"Having food and raiment, take the reſt as an overplus," *Gen.* xxxii. 10. Are we not leſs than the leaſt of God's mercies? Is not God our bountiful Benefactor? Why then do we not reſt contented with his liberal allowance? Oh! let us chide our wrangling ſpirits, and encourage confidence with contentment in God, as bleſſed David did, *Pſal.* xliii. 4. My pen hath out-run my purpoſe when I undertook this preface; but I will no longer, good reader, detain thee in the Porch, wherein I have deſigned to quicken and to prepare thee to the more fruitful improvement of this ſeaſonable, uſeful Treatiſe, wherein the Author hath exerciſed to good purpoſe both the Chriſtian graces and miniſterial gifts with which God hath enriched him. Herein the doctrine of Chriſtian contentment is clearly illuſtrated, and profitably applied; the ſpecial caſes—wherein, through change of providences, diſcontents are moſt commonly occaſioned—are particularized, and preſervatives

ſervatives applied to ſecure the ſoul. Although ſome other worthy divines have been helpful to the church of God by their diſcourſes upon this ſubject; yet there is much of peculiar uſe in this Treatiſe. The Apoſtle tells us that ſome manifeſtation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. Thy ſoul-profit is propounded as the Author's end in publiſhing this piece: and that this end may be accompliſhed, is the unfeigned deſire and hearty prayer of him, who is

Thy Servant in and for CHRIST,

20 MA 59

MAY 3. 1653. SIMEON ASHE.

THE

THE

ART

OF

DIVINE CONTENTMENT.

CHAP. I.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE TEXT.

PHIL. iv. 11.

I have learned, in whatsoever State I am, therewith to be content.

THESE words are brought in, by way of *prolepsis*, to anticipate and prevent an objection. The Apostle had, in the former verses, laid down many grave and heavenly exhortations; among the rest, to be *careful for nothing*, v. 6. Not to exclude, 1. *A prudential care*, 1 Tim. v. 8. For "he that provideth not for his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Nor, 2. *A religious care:* for we must give all *diligence to make our calling and election sure*, 2 Pet. i. 10. But 3. To exclude all *anxious care* about the issues and events of things. *Take no thought*

for

for your life, what you ſhall eat; and in this ſenſe it ſhould be a Chriſtian's care not to be careful. The word *careful*, in the Greek, comes from a primitive, that ſignifies, *To cut the heart in pieces*; a ſoul-dividing care. Take heed of this. We are bid to *commit our ways unto the Lord*, (Pſal. xxxvii. 5.) The Hebrew word is, *Roll thy way upon the Lord.* It is our work to caſt care, (*Pet.* v. 7.) and it is God's work to take care. By our immoderacy, we take his work out of his hand.

Care, when it is *eccentrick*, either diſtruſtful or diſtracting, is very diſhonourable to God. It takes away his providence, as if he ſat in heaven, and minded not what became of things here below; like a man that makes a clock, and then leaves it to go of itſelf. Immoderate care takes the heart off from better things; and uſually, while we are thinking how we ſhall do to live, we forget how to die. Care is a ſpiritual cancer, that doth waſte and diſpirit, and does no good to the ſoul. We may ſooner, by our care, add a *furlong* to our grief, than a *cubit* to our comfort. God doth threaten it as a curſe, *They ſhall eat their bread with carefulneſs*, Ezek. xii. 19. Better faſt, than eat of that bread. *Be careful for nothing.*

Now, leſt any one ſhould ſay—"Yea, Paul, thou preacheſt that to us which thou haſt ſcarce learned thyſelf: haſt thou learned not

not to be careful?" The Apoſtle ſeems tacitly to anſwer that, in the words of the text—*I have learned, in whatſoever ſtate I am, therewith to be content.*

Noble ſentence! A ſpeech worthy to be engraven upon our hearts, and to be written in letters of gold upon the crowns and diadems of princes. The text doth branch itſelf into theſe two general parts.

1. The ſcholar, *Paul—I have learned.*

2. The leſſon—*In every ſtate to be content.*

CHAP. II.

The firſt Branch of the Text—The Scholar; with the firſt Propoſition.

I Begin with the firſt.—1. The ſcholar, and his proficiency, *I have learned:* out of which I ſhall obſerve two things, by way of paraphraſe.

1. It is not, "I may," but "I have." The Apoſtle doth not ſay—"I have *heard*, that in every ſtate I ſhould be content, but I have *learned.*" Whence *doct.* 1. "It is not enough for Chriſtians to hear their duty, but they muſt learn their duty."

It is one thing to hear, and another thing to learn; as it is one thing to eat, and another thing to concoct. St. Paul was a practitioner. Chriſtians hear much; but, it is to be feared, learn little. There were

were four ſorts of ground in the parable, (*Lnke* viii. 5.) and but one good ground. An emblem of this truth—many *hearers*, but few *learners*. There are two things which keep us from learning.

1. *Slighting what we hear.* Chriſt is the *Pearl of price:* when we diſeſteem this Pearl, we ſhall never learn either it's value, or it's virtue. The Goſpel is a rare myſtery. In one place, it is called the Goſpel of Grace; in another, (*Acts*, xx. 24.) the Goſpel of Glory; becauſe in it, as in a tranſparent glaſs, the glory of God is reſplendent: but he that hath learned to contemn this myſtery, will hardly ever learn to obey it. He that looks upon the things of heaven, as things by the bye; and, perhaps, the driving of a trade, or carrying on ſome politick deſign, to be of greater importance; this man is in the high road to damnation, and will hardly ever learn the things of his peace. Who will learn that which he thinks is ſcarce worth learning?

2. *Forgetting what we hear*, Jam. i. 25. If a ſcholar have his rules laid before him, and he forgets them as faſt as he reads them, he will never learn. Ariſtotle calls the memory the *ſcribe* of the ſoul, and Bernard calls it the *ſtomach* of the ſoul; becauſe it hath a retentive faculty, and turns heavenly food into blood and ſpirits. We have great memories in other things; we remember that which is *vain*. Cyrus could

could remember the name of every ſoldier in his large army: we remember *injuries*. This is to fill a precious cabinet with dung; but how ſoon do we forget the ſacred truths of God? We are apt to forget three things: our *faults*, our *friends*, our *inſtructions*. Many Chriſtians are like ſieves. Put a ſieve into the water, and it is full; but take it forth of the water, and all runs out: ſo, while they are hearing of a ſermon, they remember ſomething; but, *take the ſieve out of the water*—as ſoon as they are gone out of the church—all is forgotten. *Let theſe ſayings*, ſaith Chriſt, *ſink down into your ears*, Luke, v. 44. In the original, it is—*Put theſe ſayings into your ears*—As a man, that would hide a jewel from being ſtolen, locks it up ſafe in his cheſt. *Let them ſink*. The word muſt not only fall as the dew that wets the leaf, but as rain which ſoaks to the root of the tree, and makes it fructify. O how often doth Satan, that fowl of the air, pick up the good ſeed that is ſown!

Uſe. Let me put you upon a ſerious trial. Some of you have heard much; you have lived forty, fifty, ſixty years, under the bleſſed trumpet of the Goſpel: What have you learned? You may have heard a thouſand ſermons, and yet not have learned one. Search your conſciences.

1. You have heard much againſt ſin. Are you *hearers*, or are you *ſcholars?*

How

How many ſermons have you heard againſt *covetouſneſs*, that it is the *root* on which pride, idolatry, treaſon, do grow? 2 *Tim.* ii. 4. One calls it a metropolitan ſin: it doth twiſt a great many ſins in with it. There is hardly any ſin, but covetouſneſs is a main ingredient in it; and yet you are like the two daughters of the Horſeleech, which cry, *Give, give.*

How much have you heard againſt *raſh anger?* That it is a ſhort phrenzy, a dry drunkenneſs; that it reſts in the *boſom of fools*; and, upon the leaſt occaſion, do your ſpirits begin to take fire. How much have you heard againſt *ſwearing?* It is Chriſt's expreſs mandate, *Swear not at all*, Matt. v. 34. This ſin, of all others, may be termed, The *unfruitful work of darkneſs*, Eph. v. 11. It is neither ſweetened with pleaſure, nor enriched with profit, the uſual vermilion wherewith Satan doth paint ſin. Swearing is forbidden with a *ſubpæna*. While the ſwearer ſhoots his oaths, like *flying arrows*, at God, to pierce his glory, God ſhoots a *flying roll* of curſes againſt him, (*Zach.* v. 2, 4.) and do you make your tongue a *racket*, by which you toſs oaths as tennis-balls? Do you ſport yourſelves with oaths, as the Philiſtines did with Sampſon, which will at laſt pull the houſe about your ears? Alas! how have they learned what ſin is, that have not yet learned

learned to leave ſin? Doth he know what a viper is, that plays with it?

2. You have heard much of Chriſt. Have you learned Chriſt? The Jews, as one ſaith, carried Chriſt in their Bibles, but not in their *hearts*, (Rom. xiv.) their ſound *went into all the earth*, Rom. x. 18. The Prophets and Apoſtles were as trumpets, whoſe ſound went abroad into the world; yet many thouſands, who heard the noiſe of theſe trumpets, had not learned Chriſt. *They have not all obeyed*, verſe 16.

1. A man may know much of Chriſt, and yet not learn Chriſt. The *devils* knew Chriſt, *Matt.* i. 24.

2. A man may preach Chriſt, and yet not learn Chriſt: as Judas.

3. A man may profeſs Chriſt, and yet not learn Chriſt. There are many profeſſors in the world that Chriſt will profeſs againſt, *Matt.* vii. 22, 23.

QUEST. What is it then to learn Chriſt?

ANSW. 1. To learn Chriſt is, to be *made like Chriſt*, when the divine characters of his holineſs are engraven upon our hearts. "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame image," *Cor.* iii. 18. There is a metamorphoſis made. A ſinner, viewing Chriſt's image in the glaſs of the Goſpel, is transformed into that image. Never did any man look upon Chriſt with a ſpiritual eye, but went away quite changed.

ed. A true ſaint is a divine landſcape, or picture, where all the rare beauties of Chriſt are lively pourtrayed and drawn forth. He hath the ſame Spirit, the ſame judgment, the ſame will, with Jeſus Chriſt.

2. To learn Chriſt, is to *believe* in him. *My Lord, my God,* (John, xx. 28.) which is the actual application of Chriſt to ourſelves; and, as it were, the ſpreading of the ſacred medicine of his blood upon our ſoul. You, that have heard much of Chriſt, and yet cannot, with an humble adherence, ſay, *My Jeſus,* be not offended if I tell you, the devil can ſay his creed as well as you.

3. To learn Chriſt, is to *live Chriſt.* When we have Bible-converſations, our lives, as rich diamonds, caſt a ſparkling luſtre in the church of God; (*Phil.* i. 27.) and are, in ſome ſenſe, parallel with the life of Chriſt, as the tranſcript with the original. So much for the firſt notion of the word.

CHAP. III.

Containing the Second Propoſition.

II. THIS word ἐμαθον, *I have learned,* is a word importing difficulty. It ſhews how hardly the Apoſtle came by his contentment of mind. St. Paul did not come naturally by it, but he had learned it.

it. It coſt him many a prayer and tear—it was taught him by the Spirit.

Whence, *doct.* 2. *Good things are hard to come by.* The buſineſs of religion is not ſo facile as moſt do imagine. *I have learned,* ſaith St. Paul. Indeed, you need not learn a man to ſin. This is natural, (*Pſal.* lviii.) and therefore facile: it comes as water out of a ſpring. It is an eaſy thing to be wicked: hell will be taken without ſtorm, but matter of religion muſt be learned. To cut the fleſh is eaſy; but to prick a vein, and not to cut an artery, is hard. The trade of ſin needs not to be learned; but the *Art of Divine Contentment* is not atchieved without holy induſtry. *I have learned.*

There are two pregnant reaſons why there muſt be ſo much ſtudy and exercitation.

1. Becauſe ſpiritual things are againſt nature. Every thing in religion is antipodes to nature. There are, in religion, two things: faith, and practice; and both are againſt nature. 1. *Faith,* or matters of faith; as, for a man to be juſtified by the righteouſneſs of another; to become a fool, that he may be wiſe; to ſave all, by loſing all—this is *againſt nature.* 2. Matters of *practice.* As, 1. *Self-denial*; for a man to deny his own *wiſdom,* and ſee himſelf blind; his own *will,* and have it melted into the will of God; plucking out the right

right eye, beheading and crucifying that ſin, which is the *favourite*, and lies neareſt to the heart: for a man to be dead to the world; and, in the midſt of want, to abound: for a man to take up the croſs, and follow Chriſt, not only in golden, but bloody paths; to embrace Religion, when it is dreſſed in it's night-clothes, all the jewels of honour and preferment being pulled off. This is *againſt nature*; and, therefore, muſt be learned. 2. *Self-examination:* for a man to take his heart, as a watch, all in pieces; to ſet up a ſpiritual inquiſition, or court of conſcience, and traverſe things in his own ſoul; to take David's candle and lanthorn, (*Pſal.* cxix. 1, 5.) and ſearch for ſin; nay, as judge, to paſs the ſentence upon himſelf, 2 *Sam.* xxiv. 17. This is *againſt nature*, and will not eaſily be attained to without learning. 3. *Self-reformation.* To ſee a man, as Caleb, *of another ſpirit*, walking antipodes to himſelf, the current of his life altered, and running into the channel of religion—this is wholly *againſt nature*. When a ſtone aſcends, it is not a natural motion, but a violent; the motion of the ſoul, heavenward, is a violent motion—it muſt be learned. Fleſh and blood is not ſkilled in theſe things. Nature can no more caſt out Nature, than Satan can caſt out Satan.

2. Becauſe ſpiritual things are *above nature*. There are ſome things *in nature*, that are

are hard to find out, as the cauſes of things, which are not learnt without ſtudy. Ariſtotle, a great philoſopher, whom ſome have called an eagle fallen from the clouds; yet could not find out the motion of the river Euripus, therefore threw himſelf into it. What then are divine things, which are in a ſphere above nature, and beyond all human diſquiſition? As the Trinity, the hypoſtatical union; the myſtery of faith, to believe againſt hope; only God's Spirit can light our candle here. The Apoſtle calls theſe *the deep things of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 10. The Goſpel is full of jewels, but they are locked up from ſenſe and reaſon. The angels in heaven are ſearching into theſe ſacred depths, *Pet.* i. 12.

Uſe. Let us beg the Spirit of God to teach us: we muſt be divinely inſtructed. The eunuch could read, but he could not underſtand, till *Philip joined himſelf to his chariot*, Acts, viii. 29. God's Spirit muſt join himſelf to our chariot; he muſt teach, or we cannot learn. *All thy children ſhall be taught of the Lord*, Iſa. liii. 13. A man may read the figure on the dial; but he cannot tell how the day goes, unleſs the ſun ſhine upon the dial: we may read the Bible over, but we cannot learn to purpoſe till the Spirit of God *ſhines into our hearts*, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Oh, implore this bleſſed Spirit! it is God's prerogative-royal

to teach. *I am the Lord thy God, that teacheth thee to profit*, Iſa. viii. 17. Miniſters may *tell* us our leſſon, God only can *teach us:* we have loſt both our hearing and eye-ſight; therefore are very unfit to learn. Ever ſince Eve liſtened to the Serpent, we have been deaf; and ſince ſhe looked on the tree of knowledge, we have been blind: but when God comes to teach, he removes theſe impediments, *Iſa.* xxxv. 5. We are naturally dead, *Eph.* ii. 17. Who will go about to teach a dead man? Yet behold, God undertakes to make dead men to underſtand myſteries! God is the grand Teacher. This is the reaſon the word preached works ſo differently upon men: two in a pew, the one is wrought upon effectually; the other lies at the ordinances as a dead child at the breaſt, and gets no nouriſhment. What is the reaſon? Becauſe the heavenly gale of the Spirit blows upon one, and not upon the other. One hath *the anointing of God, which teacheth him all things*, (1 John ii. 27.) the other hath it not. God's Spirit ſpeaks ſweetly, but irreſiſtibly. In that heavenly doxology, none could ſing the new ſong but thoſe who were *ſealed in their foreheads*, Rev. xiv. 2. Reprobates could not ſing it. Thoſe that are ſkilful in the myſteries of ſalvation, muſt have the ſeal of the Spirit upon them. Let us make this our prayer—" Lord, breathe thy Spirit

rit into thy Word:" and we have a Promiſe, which may add wings to prayer—"If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give his Spirit to them that aſk him?" *Luke* xi. 13.

And thus much for the firſt part of the text, the *ſcholar*; which I intended only as a ſhort gloſs or paraphraſe.

CHAP. IV.

The ſecond Branch of the Text—The Leſſon itſelf; with the Propoſition.

II. I Come now to the ſecond, which is the main thing—*The leſſon* itſelf: *In whatſoever ſtate I am, therewith to be content.*

Here was a rare piece of learning, indeed! and certainly more to be wondered at in St. Paul, that he knew how to turn himſelf to every condition, than all the learning in the world beſides, which hath been ſo applauded in former ages by Julius Cæſar, Ptolemy, Xenophon, the great admirers of learning.

The text hath but few words in it—*In every ſtate be content.* But if that be true, which once Fulgentius ſaid, that the moſt golden ſentence is ever meaſured by *brevity* and *ſuavity*, then this is a moſt accom-

pliſhed ſpeech; here is a great deal in a little. The text is like a precious jewel, little in *quantity*, but great in *worth* and *value*.

The main propoſition I ſhall inſiſt upon is this, *that a gracious ſpirit is a contented ſpirit*. The doctrine of contentment is very ſuperlative; and till we have learned this, we have not learned to be Chriſtians.

1. It is an *hard leſſon*. *The angels* in heaven had not learned it; they were not contented: though their eſtate was very glorious, yet they were ſtill ſoaring aloft, and aimed at ſomething higher, *Judges, v.* 6. *The angels which kept not their firſt eſtate*; they kept not their eſtate, becauſe they were not contented with their eſtate. Our firſt parents, clothed with the white robe of innocency in Paradiſe, had not learned to be content: they had aſpiring hearts; and, thinking their human nature too low and home-ſpun, would be crowned with the Deity, and be *as Gods*. Though they had the (*Gen.* iii. 5.) choice of all the trees in the garden; yet none would content them but the *tree of knowledge*, which they ſuppoſed would have been as eye-ſalve to have made them omniſcient. Oh, then, if this leſſon were ſo hard to learn *in innocency*, how hard ſhall we find it, who are clogged with corruption?

2. It is of *univerſal extent*—concerns all.

1. It concerns *rich men*. One would think

think it needleſs to preſs thoſe to content-ment, whom God hath bleſſed with great eſtates, but rather perſuade them to be humble and thankful; nay, but I ſay, *Be content.* Rich men have their diſcontents as well as others; as appears, 1. When they have a great eſtate, yet they are diſ-contented that they have no more; they would make the hundred talents a thou-ſand. A man in wine, the more he drinks, the more he thirſts. Covetouſneſs is a dry dropſy: an earthly heart is like the *grave that is never ſatisfied.* There-fore I ſay to you rich men—*Be content.*

2. Rich men, if we may ſuppoſe them to be content with their eſtates, which is very ſeldom; yet, though they have *eſtate* enough, they have not *honour* enough; (*Prov.* xxx. 16.) if their *barns* are full enough, yet their *turrets* are not high enough. They would be ſomebody in the world, as Theudas, *who boaſted himſelf to be ſomebody*: they never go ſo chear-fully as when the wind of honour and ap-plauſe fills their ſails; if this wind be down, they are diſcontented. One would think Haman had as much as his proud heart could deſire; he was ſet above all the princes, and advanced upon the pinnacle of honour to be the ſecond man in the king-dom; (*Eſt.* iii. 1.) yet, in the midſt of all his pomp, becauſe Mordecai would not uncover and kneel, he is diſcontented,

(*verſe* 2.) and full of wrath, (*verſe* 5.) and there is no way to aſſuage this pleuriſy of revenge, but by letting all the Jews blood, and offering them up in ſacrifice. The itch of honour is ſeldom allayed without blood; therefore I ſay to you rich men—*Be content.*

3. Rich men, if we may ſuppoſe them to be content with their honour and magnificent titles, yet they have not always contentment in their *relations.* She that lies in the boſom, may ſometimes blow the coals; as Job's wife, who in a pet would have him fall out with God himſelf—*Curſe God, and die.* Sometimes children cauſe diſcontent. How oft is it ſeen, that the mother's milk doth nouriſh a viper? And he that once ſucked her breaſt, goes about to ſuck her blood? Parents do often of *grapes* gather thorns, and of *figs* thiſtles. Children are ſweet-briar: like the roſe, which is a flagrant flower; but, as Baſil ſaith, it hath it's prickles. Our relative comforts are not all pure wine, but mixed; they have in them more dregs than ſpirits, and are like that river Plutarch ſpeaks of, where the waters in the morning run ſweet, but in the evening run bitter. We have no *charter of exemption* granted us in this life; therefore rich men had need be called upon to be contented.

2. The doctrine of contentment concerns poor men. You that do ſuck ſo liberally

berally from the breaſts of Providence, *be content*; it is an hard leſſon, therefore it had need be ſet upon the ſooner. How hard is it, when the livelihood is even gone —a great eſtate boiled away almoſt to nothing—then to be content? The means of ſubſiſtence is in Scripture called *our life*, becauſe it is the very ſinews of life. The woman in the Goſpel ſpent *all her living upon the phyſicians*, (Luke viii. 43.) which, in the Greek, implies, that ſhe ſpent her whole life upon the phyſicians, becauſe ſhe ſpent the means by which ſhe ſhould live. It is much, when poverty hath clipped our wings, then to be content; but, though hard, it is excellent: and the Apoſtle here had learnt, *in every ſtate, to be content.*

God hath brought St. Paul into as great variety of conditions, as ever we read of any man, and yet he was content; elſe, ſure, he could never have gone through it with ſo much chearfulneſs. See into what viciſſitudes this bleſſed Apoſtle was caſt—*We are troubled on every ſide!* There was the *ſadneſs* of his condition; but *not diſtreſſed*, there was his *content* in that condition. *We are perplexed*; there is his *affliction: but not in deſpair*; there is his *contentment.* And if we read a little further—"In afflictions, in neceſſities, in diſtreſſes, in ſtripes, in impriſonments, in tumults," &c. (2 *Cor.* vi. 4.) there is his trouble. And behold his content—"As having no-

thing, yet poſſeſſing all things," *verſe* 10. When the Apoſtle was driven out of all; yet, in regard of that ſweet contentment of mind, which was like muſick in his ſoul, he poſſeſſed all. We read a ſhort map or hiſtory of his ſufferings—" In priſons more frequent, in death oft," &c. 2 *Cor.* xi. 23, 24, 25. Yet behold the bleſſed frame and temper of his ſpirit—" I have learned, in whatſoever ſtate I am, therewith to be content."

Which way ſoever Providence did blow, he had ſuch heavenly ſkill and dexterity, that he knew how to ſteer his courſe. For his outward eſtate he was indifferent: he could be either on the top of Jacob's Ladder, or the bottom; he could ſing either the dirge or the anthem; he could be any thing that God would have him. " I know how to want, and how to abound." There is a rare pattern for us to imitate! Paul, in regard of his faith and courage, was like a cedar; he could be ſtirred: but, for his outward condition, he was like a *reed*, bending every way with the wind of Providence. When a proſperous gale did blow upon him, he could bend with that—*I know how to be full*; and when a boiſterous guſt of affliction did blow, he could bend in humility with that—*I know how to be hungry*. St. Paul was, as Ariſtotle ſpeaks, like a *die* that hath four ſquares; throw it which way you will, it falls upon a bottom: let God

God throw the Apoſtle which way he would, he fell upon this *bottom* of contentment. A contented ſpirit is like a watch; though you carry it up and down with you, yet the ſpring of it is not ſhaken, nor the wheels out of order, but the watch keeps it's perfect motion: ſo it was with St. Paul; though God had carried him into various conditions, yet he was not lift up with the one, nor caſt down with the other. The *ſpring* of his heart was not broken, the *wheels* of his affection were not diſordered, but kept their conſtant motion toward Heaven—*ſtill content.* The ſhip that lies at anchor may ſometimes be a little ſhaken, but never ſinks: fleſh and blood may have it's fears and diſquiets, but Grace doth check them. A Chriſtian, having caſt anchor in Heaven, his heart never ſinks: a gracious ſpirit is a contented ſpirit.

This is a rare art! Paul did not learn it at the feet of Gamaliel—*I am inſtructed*, verſe 12. "I am initiated into this holy myſtery:" as if he had ſaid—"I have gotten the *divine art*, I have the knack of it." God muſt make us right artiſts. If we ſhould put ſome men to an art that they are not ſkilled in, how unfit would they be for it? Put an huſbandman to limning or drawing pictures, what ſtrange work would he make? This is out of his ſphere. Take a limner, that is exact in laying of

colours, and put him to plough, or ſet him to planting and grafting of trees; this is not his art, he is not ſkilled in it. Bid a natural man live by faith; and, when all things go croſs, *be contented:* you bid him do that he has no ſkill in; you may as well bid a child guide the ſtern of a ſhip. To live contentedly upon God, in the deficiency of outward comforts, is an art which *fleſh and blood hath not revealed:* nay, many of God's own children, who excel in ſome duties of religion; when they come to this of *contentment*, how do they bungle? They have ſcarcely commenced maſters of this art.

CHAP. V.

The Reſolving of ſome Queſtions.

FOR the illuſtrating of this doctrine, I ſhall propound theſe queſtions—

QUEST. 1. Whether a Chriſtian may not be ſenſible of his condition, and yet be contented?

ANSW. Yes; for elſe he is not a Saint, but a Stoick. Rachel did well to weep for her children—*there was nature*; but her fault was, ſhe refuſed to be comforted—*there was diſcontent.* Chriſt himſelf was *ſenſible*, when he ſweat great drops of blood, and ſaid—*Father, if it be poſſible,*

let

let this cup paſs from me; (Mat. xxvi. 39.) *yet* He was *contented*, and ſweetly ſubmitted his will. *Nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* The Apoſtle bids us *humble ourſelves under the mighty hand of God*, (2 Pet. v. 6.) which we cannot do unleſs we are ſenſible of it.

QUEST. 2. Whether a Chriſtian may not lay open his grievances to God, and yet be contented?

ANSW. Yes—*Unto thee have I opened my cauſe*, Jer. xx. 12. And *David poured out his complaint before the Lord*, Pſal. cxliii. 2. We may cry to God, and deſire him to write down all our injuries: ſhall not the child complain to his Father? When any burden is upon the ſpirit, prayer gives vent; it eaſeth the heart. Hannah's ſpirit was burdened—*I am*, ſays ſhe, *a woman of a troubled ſpirit*, 1 Sam. ii. 17. Now, having prayed and wept, ſhe went away, and was no more ſad: only here is the difference between an holy complaint, and a diſcontented complaint; in the one, we complain *to God*; in the other, we complain *of God*.

QUEST. 3. What is it, properly, that contentment doth exclude?

ANSW. There are three things which contentment doth baniſh out of it's dioceſe, and can by no means conſiſt with it.

1. It excludes a *vexatious repining*. This is properly the daughter of Diſcontent—*I*

mourn in my complaint, Pſal. lv. 2. He doth not ſay, "I murmur in my complaint." Murmuring is no better than mutiny in the heart; it is a riſing up againſt God. When the ſea is rough and unquiet, it caſts forth nothing but foam: when the heart is diſcontented, it caſts forth the foam of anger, impatience, and ſometimes little better than blaſphemy. Murmuring is nothing elſe but the ſcum which boils off from a diſcontented heart.

2. It excludes an *uneven diſcompoſure*. When a man ſaith—"I am in ſuch ſtraights, that I know not how to revolve or get out: I ſhall be undone!" Head and heart are ſo taken up, that a man is not fit to pray, or meditate, &c. he is not himſelf. Juſt as when an army is routed, one man runs this way, and another that, the army is put into diſorder: ſo a man's thoughts run up and down diſtracted. Diſcontent doth diſlocate and unjoint the ſoul; it pulls off the wheels.

3. It excludes a *childiſh deſpondency*; and this is uſually conſequent upon the other. A man being in an hurry of mind, not knowing which way to extricate or wind himſelf out of the preſent trouble, begins to faint and ſink under it. For care is to the mind as a burden to the back, it loads the ſpirits, and with overloading ſinks them. A deſpondent ſpirit is a diſcontented ſpirit.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Shewing the Nature of Contentment.

HAVING anſwered theſe queſtions, I ſhall, in the next place, come to deſcribe Contentment.

It is a ſweet temper of ſpirit, whereby a Chriſtian carries himſelf in an equal poiſe in every condition. The nature of this will appear more clear in theſe three aphoriſms.

1. Contentment is a *divine thing*. It becomes ours, not by *acquiſition*, but *infuſion*. It is a ſlip taken off from the Tree of Life, and planted by the Spirit of God in the ſoul; it is a fruit, that grows not in the garden of Philoſophy, but is of an heavenly birth: it is, therefore, very obſervable, that *Contentment* is joined with Godlineſs, and goes in equipage—"But "godlineſs, with contentment, is great "gain," 1 *Tim.* vi. 6. Contentment being a conſequent of godlineſs, or concomitant, or *both*, I call it *divine*, to contradiſtinguiſh it to that contentment which a moral man may arrive at. Heathens have ſeemed to have this contentment; but it was only the ſhadow and picture of it; the *beryll*, not the true *diamond*. Theirs was but *civil*, this is *ſacred*; theirs was only from principles of *reaſon*, this of *religion*; theirs

theirs was only lighted at Nature's torch, this at the Lamp of Scripture. Reaſon may a little teach contentment; as thus—"Whatever my condition be, this is that I am born to; and, if I meet with croſſes, it is but a catholick miſery—all have their ſhare; why, therefore, ſhould I be troubled?" Reaſon may ſuggeſt this; and, indeed, this may be rather *conſtraint* than *content:* but, to live ſecurely and chearfully upon God, in the abatement of creature ſupplies, *religion* can only bring this into the ſoul's exchequer.

2. Contentment is an *intrinſical thing.* It lies within a man; not in the bark, but the root. Contentment hath both it's fountain and ſtream in the ſoul. The beam hath not it's light from the air. The beams of comfort, which a contented man hath, do not ariſe from foreign comforts, but from within. As ſorrow is ſeated in the ſpirit, *the heart knows it's own grief*; (Prov. xiv. 10.) ſo contentment lies within the ſoul, and doth not depend upon externals. Hence I gather, that outward troubles cannot hinder this bleſſed contentment. It is a ſpiritual thing, and ariſeth from ſpiritual grounds, viz. *The apprehenſion of God's love.* When there is a tempeſt without, there may be muſick within. A bee may ſting through the ſkin, but it cannot ſting to the heart. Outward afflictions cannot ſting to a Chriſtian's heart, where content-

ment

ment lies. Thieves may plunder us of our money and plate, but not of this pearl of contentment, unleſs we are willing to part with it; for it is locked up in the *cabinet of the heart*. The ſoul which is poſſeſſed of this rich treaſure of contentment, is like Noah in the ark, that can ſing in the midſt of a deluge.

3. Contentment is an *habitual thing*. It ſhines, with a fixed light, in the firmament of the ſoul. Contentment doth not appear only now and then, as ſome ſtars which are ſeen but ſeldom, it is a ſettled temper of the heart: one action doth not denominate it. He is not ſaid to be a liberal man, that gives alms once in his life; a covetous man may do ſo: but he is ſaid to be liberal, that is *given to liberality*; (Rom. xii. 13.) that is, who, upon all occaſions, is willing to indulge the neceſſities of the poor—ſo he is ſaid to be a contented man, that is given to contentment. It is not *caſual*, but *conſtant*. Ariſtotle, in his rhetorick, diſtinguiſheth between colours in the face that ariſe from *paſſion*, and thoſe which ariſe from *complexion*. The pale face may look red when it bluſheth; but this is only a paſſion: he is ſaid properly to be ruddy and ſanguine, who is conſtantly ſo; it is his complexion. He is not a contented man, who is ſo upon an occaſion, and perhaps when he is pleaſed, but who

is

is ſo conſtantly; it is the habit and complexion of his ſoul.

CHAP. VII.

Reaſons preſſing to Holy Contentment.

HAVING opened the nature of contentment, I come next to lay down ſome reaſons or arguments to contentment, which may preponderate with us.

The firſt is, *God's precept.* It is charged upon us as a duty. *Be content with ſuch things as you have,* Heb. xiii. 5. The ſame God who hath bid us believe, hath bid us be content; if we obey not, we run ourſelves into a ſtate of diſcontent. God's word is a ſufficient warrant; it hath *authority* in it, and muſt be a *ſacred ſpell* to diſcontent. *Ipſe dixit* was enough among Pythagoras his ſcholars—*Be it enacted,* is the royal ſtyle. God's words muſt be the ſtar that guides, and his will the weight that moves our obedience. His word is a law, and hath majeſty enough in it to captivate us into obedience: our hearts muſt not be more unquiet than the raging ſea, which at his word is ſtilled, *Matt.* viii. 26.

2. The ſecond reaſon enforcing contentment, is, *God's Promiſe*; for *he hath ſaid, I will never leave thee, nor forſake thee,*

thee, (Heb. xiv. 5.) where God hath engaged himſelf, under hand and ſeal, for our neceſſary proviſions. If a king ſhould ſay to one of his ſubjects—"I will take care for thee: as long as I have any crown-revenues, thou ſhalt be provided for. If thou art in danger, I will ſecure thee; if in want, I will ſupply thee." Would not that ſubject be content? Behold, God hath here made a promiſe to the believer; and, as it were, entered into bond for his ſecurity—*I will never leave thee.* Shall not this charm down the devil of diſcontent? *Leave thy fatherleſs children with me, I will preſerve them alive*, Jer. xlix. 11. Methinks I ſee the godly man on his death-bed, much diſcontented; and hear him complaining—"What will become of my wife and children, when I am dead and gone? They may come to poverty." God ſaith—"Trouble not thyſelf; *be content:* I will take care of thy children; and *let thy widow truſt in me.*" God hath made a promiſe to us, *That he will not leave us*; and hath entailed the promiſe upon our *wife* and *children.* And will not this ſatisfy? True faith will take God's ſingle bond, without calling for witneſſes.

3. Be contented, *by virtue of a decree.* Whatever our condition be, God, the great umpire of the world, hath from eternity decreed that condition for us; and, by his providence, ordered all appurtenances

nances thereunto. Let a Chriſtian often think with himſelf—"Who hath placed me here, whether I am in a higher ſtate, or in a lower? Not chance, or fortune, as the purblind Heathens imagined—no, it is the wiſe God that hath, by his providence, fixed me in this orb." We muſt act that ſcene which God will have us. Say not, ſuch a one hath occaſioned this to me; look not too much at the under-wheel. We read, in Ezekiel, of *a wheel within a wheel*, Ezek. i. 16. God's *decree* is the cauſe of the turning of the wheels; and his *providence* is the inner wheel, that moves all the reſt. God's providence is the helm, which turns about the whole ſhip of the univerſe: ſay, then, as holy David—*I was ſilent, becauſe thou, Lord, didſt it*, Pſal. xxxix. 9. God's providence—which is nothing elſe but the carrying on of his decree—ſhould be a counterpoiſe againſt diſcontent: God hath ſet us in our ſtation, and he hath done it in wiſdom.

We fancy ſuch a condition of life good for us; whereas, if we were our own carvers, we ſhould often cut the worſt piece. Lot, being put to his choice, did chuſe Sodom, (*Gen.* xiii. 10.) which ſoon after was burnt with fire. Rachel was very deſirous of children—*Give me children, or I die*, (Gen. xxx. 1.) and it coſt her her life in bringing forth a child. Abraham was earneſt for Iſhmael—*O that Iſhmael may*

may live before thee! Gen. xvii. 18. But he had little comfort either of him or his ſeed: he was born a ſon of ſtrife—*His hand was againſt every man, and every man's hand againſt him.* The diſciples wept for Chriſt's leaving the world; they choſe his corporal preſence: whereas it was beſt for them that Chriſt ſhould be gone, for elſe *the Comforter would not come,* John, xvi. 7. David choſe the life of his child—*He wept and faſted for it,* (2 Sam. xii. 16.) whereas, if the child had lived, it would have been a perpetual monument of his ſhame. We ſtand oft in our own light: if we ſhould ſort or parcel out our own comforts, we ſhould hit upon the wrong. Is it not well for the child that the parent ſhould chuſe for it? Were it left to itſelf, it would, perhaps, chuſe a knife to cut it's own fingers. A man, in a paroxyſm, calls for wine; which, if he had, it were little better than poiſon. It is well for the patient that he is at the Phyſician's appointment.

The conſideration of a decree determining, and a providence diſpoſing all things that fall out, ſhould work our hearts to holy contentment. The wiſe God hath ordered our condition: if he ſees it better for us to abound, we ſhall abound; if he ſees it better for us to want, we ſhall want. Be content to be at God's diſpoſal.

God

God ſees, in his infinite wiſdom, the ſame condition is not *convenient* for all; that which is good for one, may be bad for another. One ſeaſon of weather will not ſerve all men's occaſions; one needs *ſun-ſhine*, another *rain*. One condition of life will not fit every man, no more than one ſuit of apparel will fit every body: proſperity is not fit for all, nor yet adverſity. If one man be brought low, perhaps he can bear it better; he hath a greater ſtock of grace, more faith and patience; he can *gather grapes of thorns*, and pick ſome comfort out of the Croſs: every one cannot do this. Another man is ſeated in an eminent place of dignity; he is fitter for it: perhaps it is a place requiring more parts and judgment, which every one is not capable of; perhaps he can uſe his eſtate better—he hath a publick *heart*, as well as a publick *place*. The wiſe God ſees that condition to be bad for one, which is good for another: hence it is, he placeth men in different orbs and ſpheres, ſome higher, ſome lower. One man deſires *health*, God ſees ſickneſs better for him: God will work health out of ſickneſs, by bringing the *body of death* into a conſumption. Another man deſires *liberty*, God ſees reſtraint better for him. He will work his liberty by reſtraint; when his feet are bound, his heart ſhall be moſt enlarged. Did we believe this, it would give

give check to the ſinful diſputes and cavils of our hearts—"Shall I be diſcontented at that which is enacted by a decree, and ordered by a Providence?" Is this to be a child, or a rebel?

CHAP. VIII.

USE I.

Shewing how a Chriſtian may make his Life comfortable.

Uſe I. IT ſhews how a Chriſtian may come to lead a comfortable life, even an heaven upon earth, be the times what they will; viz. by *Chriſtian contentment*, Prov. xv. 13. The comfort of life doth not ſtand in having much; it is Chriſt's maxim—*Man's life conſiſteth not in the abundance of things which he doth poſſeſs*, (Luke xii. 15.) but it is in being contented. Is not the bee as well contented with the feeding on the dew, or ſucking from a flower, as the ox that grazeth on the mountains? Contentment lies within a man, *in the heart*; and the way to be comfortable is, not by having our barns filled, but our minds quiet. "The contented man," ſaith Seneca, "is the happy man." Diſcontent is a fretting humour, which dries the brains, waſtes the ſpirits, corrodes and eats

eats out the comfort of life—Diſcontent makes a man that he doth not *enjoy* what he doth *poſſeſs*. A drop or two of vinegar will ſour a whole glaſs of wine. Let a man have the affluence and confluence of worldly comforts, a drop or two of diſcontent will embitter and poiſon all. *Comfort* depends upon *Contentment*. Jacob went halting, when the ſinew upon the hollow of his thigh ſhrank; ſo when the ſinew of contentment begins to ſhrink, we go halting in our comforts. Contentment is as neceſſary to keep the life comfortable, as oil is neceſſary to keep the lamp burning: the clouds of diſcontent do often drop the ſhowers of tears. Would we have comfort in our lives, be content. Why doſt thou complain of thy troubles? It is not trouble that troubles, but diſcontent; it is not the water without the ſhip, but the water that gets within the leak, which drowns it. It is not outward affliction that can make the life of a Chriſtian ſad; a contented mind would ſail above theſe waters: but, when there's a leak of diſcontent open, and trouble gets into the heart, then it is diſquieted, and ſinks.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

USE 2.

A Check to the diſcontented Chriſtian.

HERE is a juſt reproof to ſuch as are diſcontented with their condition. This diſeaſe is almoſt epidemical. Some, not content with their callings which God hath ſet them in, muſt be a ſtep higher, from the *plough* to the *throne*; who, like the *ſpider* in the *Proverbs*, will *take hold with their hands, and be in king's palaces*, Prov. xxx. 28. Others from the *ſhop* to the *pulpit*, (Numb. xii. 2.) they would be in the temple of *Honour*, before they are in the temple of *Virtue*; who ſtep into Moſes's chair, without Aaron's bells and pomegranates; like apes, which do moſt ſhew their deformity when they are climbing. Is it not enough that God hath beſtowed gifts upon men in private to edify, that he hath enriched them with many mercies? But *ſeek they the prieſthood alſo?* Numb. xvi. 9. What is this but diſcontent, ariſing from high-flown pride? Theſe do ſecretly tax the wiſdom of God, that he hath not ſcrewed them up in their condition a peg higher. Every man is complaining that his eſtate is no better, though he ſeldom com-

complains that his heart is no better. One man commends this kind of life, another commends that; one man thinks a country-life beſt, another a city-life. The ſoldier thinks it beſt to be a merchant, and the merchant to be a ſoldier. Men can be content to be any thing but what God will have them. How is it that no man is contented? Very few Chriſtians have learned St. Paul's leſſon: neither poor nor rich know how to be content; they can learn any thing but this.

1. If men are poor, they learn to be, 1. *Envious*. They malign thoſe that are above them; another's proſperity is an eye-ſore. When God's candle ſhines upon their neighbour's tabernacle, this light offends them: in the midſt of wants, men can in this ſenſe abound; *viz.* in *envy* and *malice*. An *envious* eye is an evil eye. 2. They learn to be *querulous*, ſtill complaining, as if God had dealt hardly with them: they are ever telling of their wants; they want this or that comfort; whereas, their greateſt want is a contented ſpirit. Thoſe that are well enough content with their *ſins*, yet are not content with their *condition*.

2. If men are rich, they learn to be *covetous*, thirſting inſatiably after the world; and, by an unjuſt means, ſcraping it together. *Their right-hand is full of bribes*, as the Pſalmiſt expreſſeth it, *Pſal.* xxvi. 10. Put a good cauſe in one ſcale, and a piece of

of gold in the other, and the gold weighs heavieſt. "There are," ſaith Solomon, "four things that ſay, *It is not enough*," Prov. xxx. 15. I may add a fifth, *viz.* the *heart of a covetous man:* ſo that neither poor nor rich know how to be content.

Never, certainly, ſince the creation, did this ſin of diſcontent *reign*, or rather *rage*, more than in our times; never was God more diſhonoured. You can hardly ſpeak with any, but the paſſion of his tongue betrays the diſcontent of his heart; every one liſps out his trouble, and here even the ſtammering tongue ſpeaks too free and fluently. If we have not what we deſire, God ſhall not have a good look from us; but preſently we are ſick of diſcontent, and ready to die out of an humour. If God will not give the people of Iſrael for their luſts, they bid him take their lives; they muſt have quails to their manna. Ahab, though a king—and one would think his crown-lands had been ſufficient for him—yet is ſullen and diſcontented for want of Naboth's vineyard. Jonah, though a good man and a prophet, yet ready to die in *a pet*; (Jonah, iv. 8.) and becauſe God killed his gourd—*Kill me too*, ſaid he. Rachel—*Give me children, or I die:* ſhe had many bleſſings, if ſhe could have ſeen them, but wanted this bleſſing of contentment. God will *ſupply our wants*, but muſt he ſatisfy our *luſts* too? Many are diſcontented for a

very trifle; another hath a better dreſs, a richer jewel, a newer faſhion. Nero, not content with his empire, was troubled that the muſicians had more ſkill in playing than he. How fantaſtick are ſome, that pine away in diſcontent for the want of thoſe things which, if they had, would but render them more ridiculous!

CHAP. X.

USE 3.

A Perſuaſive to Contentment.

IT exhorts us to labour for contentment: this is that which doth beautify and beſpangle a Chriſtian; and, as a ſpiritual embroidery, doth ſet him off in the eyes of the world.

OBJECT. But methinks I hear ſome bitterly complaining, and ſaying to me—"Alas! how is it poſſible to be contented! the Lord *hath made my chain heavy*," (Lam. iii. 7.) "he hath caſt me into a very ſad condition."

ANSW. There is no ſin but labours either to hide itſelf under ſome maſk; or, if it cannot be concealed, then to vindicate itſelf by ſome apology. This ſin of Diſcontent I find very witty in it's apologies; which I ſhall firſt diſcover, and then make a reply. We muſt lay it down for a rule, that Diſcontent is a *ſin*—ſo that all the pretences

pretences and apologies wherewith it labours to juſtify itſelf, are but the painting and dreſſing of a ſtrumpet.

SECT. I.

The firſt Apology that Diſcontent makes— anſwered.

THE firſt apology which Diſcontent makes, is this—"I have loſt a child." Paulina, upon the loſs of her children, was ſo poſſeſſed with a ſpirit of ſadneſs, that ſhe had like to have entombed herſelf in her own diſcontent. Our love to *relation* is oftentimes more than our love to *religion*.

ANSW. 1. We muſt be content, not only when God gives mercies, but when he taketh them away. If we muſt *in every thing* give thanks, (1 *Theſ.* v. 18.) then in nothing be diſcontented.

2. Perhaps God has taken away the *ciſtern*, that he may give you the more of the *ſpring*; he hath darkened the ſtar-light, that you may have more ſun-light. God intends you ſhall have more of himſelf; and is not he better than *ten ſons?* Look not ſo much upon a temporal loſs, as a ſpiritual gain: the comforts of the world *run dregs*; thoſe which come out of the granary of the Promiſe are purer and ſweeter.

3. Your child was not given, but lent. *I have*, ſaith Hannah, *lent my ſon to the Lord*, 1 Sam. i. 12. She lent him! the Lord had but lent him to her. Mercies are not entailed upon us, but lent: what a man lends, he may call for it again when he pleaſe. God hath put out a child to thee awhile to nurſe; wilt thou be diſpleaſed if he takes his child home again? O be not diſcontented that a mercy is taken away from you, but rather be thankful that it was lent you ſo long.

4. Suppoſe your child was taken from you, either he was good or bad. If he was *rebellious*, you have not ſo much parted with a child as a burden; you grieve for that which might have been a greater grief to you. If he was *religious*, then remember, he is taken *from the evil to come*, (Iſaiah, lvii. 1.) and placed in his centre of felicity. This lower region being full of groſs and hurtful vapours, how happy are thoſe who are mounted into the celeſtial orbs! The righteous *is taken away*—in the original it is, he is *gathered*; a wicked child dying is *cut off*, but the pious child is *gathered*. Even as we ſee men gather flowers, and candy them, and preſerve them by them; ſo hath God gathered thy child as a ſweet flower, that he may candy it with glory, and preſerve it by him for ever. Why then ſhould a Chriſtian be diſcontented? why ſhould he weep exceſſively?

ſively? *Daughters of Jeruſalem, weep not for me; but weep for yourſelves,* Luke, xxiii. 28. So, could we hear our children ſpeaking to us out of heaven, they would ſay—"Weep not for us who are happy; we lie upon a ſoft pillow, even in the boſom of Chriſt: *the Prince of Peace* is embracing us, and kiſſing us with the kiſſes of his lips. Be not troubled at our preferment: *weep not for us,* but weep for yourſelves, who are in a ſinful, ſorrowful world. You are in the *valley of tears,* but we are on the *mountains of ſpices:* we are gotten to our harbour, but you are ſtill toſſing upon the waves of inconſtancy." O Chriſtian! be not *diſcontented* that thou haſt parted with ſuch a child, but rather rejoice that thou hadſt ſuch a child to part with: break forth into thankfulneſs. What an honour is it to a parent to beget ſuch a child, that while he lives increaſeth the *joy* of the glorified angels; and, when he dies, increaſeth the *number* of the glorified ſaints! *Luke,* xv. 10.

5. If God hath taken away one of your children, he hath left you more; he might have ſtripped you of all. He took away all Job's comforts, his *eſtate,* his *children*; and, indeed, his wife was left but as a croſs. Satan made a bow of this rib, as Chryſoſtom ſpeaks, and ſhot a temptation by her at Job, thinking to have ſhot him to the heart—*Curſe God, and die*: but

Job had upon him the breaſt-plate of *integrity*; and, though his children were taken away, yet not his graces; ſtill he is content, ſtill he bleſſed God. O think how many mercies you ſtill enjoy! yet our baſe hearts are more diſcontented at one loſs, than thankful for an hundred mercies.

God hath plucked one bunch of grapes from you; but how many precious cluſters are left behind?

OBJECT. "But it was my only child, the ſtaff of my age, the ſeed of my comfort, and the only bloſſom out of which the honour of an ancient family did grow."

ANSW. 1. God hath promiſed you—if you belong to him—a name *better than of ſons and daughters*, Iſaiah, lvi. 5. Is he dead that ſhould have been the monument to have kept up the name of a family? God hath given you a *new name*; he hath written your name in the book of life. Behold your ſpiritual heraldry; here is a name that cannot be cut off.

2. Hath God taken away thy *only child?* He hath given thee his *only Son:* this is a happy exchange. What needs he complain of loſſes, that hath Chriſt? He is his Father's *brightneſs*, (Heb. i. 3.) his *riches*, (Col. ii. 9.) his *delight*, Pſal. xlii. 1. Is there enough in Chriſt to delight the heart of God? and is there not enough in him to raviſh us with holy delight? He is *wiſdom* to teach us, *righteouſneſs* to acquit us, *ſanctification*

ſanctification to adorn us; he is that royal and princely gift; he is the *bread of angels*, (Col. iii. 10.) the joy and triumph of ſaints; he is *all in all*. Why, then, art thou diſcontented? Though thy child be loſt, yet thou haſt him for whom all things are loſs.

3. And, laſtly, let us bluſh to think that Nature ſhould ſeem to out-ſtrip Grace. Pulvillus, an Heathen, when he was about to conſecrate a temple to Jupiter, and news was brought to him of the death of his ſon, would not deſiſt from his enterprize; but, with much compoſure of mind, gave order for decent burial.

SECT. II.

The ſecond Apology anſwered.

THE ſecond apology that Diſcontent makes, is—"I have a great part of my eſtate melted away, and trading begins to fail."

God is pleaſed ſometimes to bring his children very low, and cut them ſhort in their eſtate: it fares with them as with that widow who had nothing in her houſe ſave *a pot of oil*, 2 Kings, iv. 2. But be content.

1. God hath taken away your *eſtate*, but not your *portion*. This is a ſacred paradox.

Honour and eſtate are not part of a Chriſtian's jointure; they are rather *acceſſaries* than *eſſentials*, and are extrinſical and foreign; therefore the loſs of theſe cannot denominate a man miſerable: ſtill the Portion remains—*The Lord is my portion, ſaith my ſoul*, Lam. iii. 24. Suppoſe one were worth a million of money, and he ſhould chance to loſe a pin off his ſleeve; this is no part of his eſtate, nor can we ſay he is undone: the loſs of ſublunary comforts is not ſo much to a Chriſtian's portion as the loſs of a pin is to a million. *Theſe things ſhall be added to you*, (Matth. vi. 22.) they ſhall be caſt in as overplus. When a man buys a piece of cloth, he hath an inch or two given into the meaſure. Now, though he loſe his inch of cloth, yet he is not undone; for ſtill the whole piece remains. Our outward eſtate is not ſo much in regard of the *portion*, as an inch of cloth is to the whole piece; why then ſhould a Chriſtian be diſcontented, when the title to his ſpiritual treaſure remains? A thief may take away all my money that I have about me, but not my land; ſtill a Chriſtian hath a title to the *land of promiſe*. Mary hath choſen the better part, *which ſhall not be taken from her*.

2. Perhaps, if thy eſtate had not been loſt, thy ſoul might have been loſt: outward comforts do often quench inward heat. God cannot beſtow a jewel upon us,

us, but we fall ſo in love with it, that we forget him that gave it. What pity is it that we ſhould commit idolatry with the creature! God is forced ſometimes to drain away an eſtate: the plate and jewels are often caſt over-board to ſave the paſſenger. Many a man may curſe the time that ever he had ſuch an eſtate: it hath been an *enchantment* to draw away his heart from God. Some there are that *will be rich*, and they fall into a *ſnare*, 1 Tim. vi. 9. Art thou troubled that God hath prevented a ſnare? Riches are *thorns*, Matt. xiii. 7. Art thou angry that God hath pulled away a thorn from thee? Riches are compared to *thick clay*, Hab. ii. 6. Perhaps thy affections, which are *the feet of the ſoul*, might have ſtuck ſo faſt in this golden clay, that they could not have aſcended up to heaven. *Be content.* If God ſtop our outward comforts, it is that the ſtream of our love may run faſter another way.

3. If your eſtate be ſmall, yet God can bleſs a little. It is not how much *money* we have, but how much *bleſſing*. He that often curſeth the bags of gold, can bleſs the *meal in the barrel*, and the *oil in the cruſe*. What if thou haſt not the full fleſh-pots? Yet thou haſt a promiſe—*I will bleſs her proviſion*, (Pſal. cxxxii. 15.) and then a little goes a great way. Be content, thou haſt the dew of a bleſſing diſtilled. A *dinner of green herbs*, where love is, is ſweet—I may add, where the love of God is.

Another may have more eſtate than you, but more care; more riches, leſs reſt; more revenues, but withal more occaſions of expence. He hath a greater inheritance, yet perhaps God doth not give him *power to eat thereof*, (Eccleſ. vi. 2.) he hath the *dominion* of his eſtate, not the *uſe*; he holds more, but enjoys leſs: in a word, thou haſt leſs gold than he, perhaps leſs guilt.

4. You did never ſo thrive in your ſpiritual trade; your heart was never ſo low, as ſince your condition was ſo low; you were never *ſo poor in Spirit*, never *ſo rich in Faith*. You did never run the ways of God's *commandments* ſo faſt as ſince ſome of your golden weights were taken off. You never had ſuch trading for heaven all your life. You did never make ſuch adventures upon the Promiſe, as ſince you left off your ſea adventures. This is the beſt kind of merchandize. O Chriſtian, thou never hadſt ſuch incomes of the Spirit, ſuch ſpring-tides of joy: and what, though weak in eſtate, if ſtrong in aſſurance, be content. What you have loſt one way, you have gained another.

5. Be your loſſes what they will in this kind—remember, in every loſs there is only a *ſuffering:* but in every diſcontent there is a *ſin*; and one ſin is worſe than a thouſand ſufferings. What! becauſe ſome of my *revenues* are gone, ſhall I part with ſome of my *righteouſneſs?* Shall my faith and patience go too? Becauſe I do not poſſeſs

poſſeſs an eſtate, ſhall I not therefore poſſeſs my own ſpirit? O learn to be content!

SECT. III.

The third Apology anſwered.

THE third apology is—"It is ſad with me in my relations; where I ſhould find moſt comfort, there I have moſt grief." This apology or objection branceth itſelf into two particulars; whereto I ſhall give a diſtinct reply.

1. My child goes on in rebellion! I fear I have brought forth a child for the devil! It is indeed ſad to think that hell ſhould be paved with the ſkulls of any of our children! And certainly the *pangs of grief* which the mother hath in this kind are worſe than *her pangs of travail.* But though you ought to be humbled, yet not diſcontented. For conſider—

1. You may pick ſomething out of your child's undutifulneſs: the child's ſin is ſometimes the parent's ſermon. The undutifulneſs of children to us may be a *memento,* to put us in mind of our *undutifulneſs once* to God. Time was when *we* were rebellious children. How long did our hearts ſtand out as garriſons againſt God? How long did he parley with us, and beſeech us, ere we would yield? He walked

in the tenderneſs of his heart towards us, but we walked in the frowardneſs of our hearts towards him; and, ſince grace hath been planted in our ſouls, how much of the wild olive is ſtill in us? How many motions of the Spirit do we daily reſiſt? how many unkindneſſes and affronts have we put upon Chriſt? Let this open a ſpring of repentance. Look upon your child's rebellion, and mourn for your own rebellion.

2. Though to ſee him undutiful is your *grief*, yet not always your *ſin*. Hath a parent given the child, not only the milk of the breaſt, but *the ſincere milk of the Word?* 1 Pet. ii. 2. Haſt thou ſeaſoned his tender years with religious education? Thou canſt do no more. Parents can only work knowledge; God muſt work grace: they can only lay the wood together, it is God muſt make it burn. A parent can only be a guide to ſhew his child the way to heaven; the Spirit of God muſt be a load-ſtone to draw his heart into that way. *Am I in God's ſtead*, ſaith Jacob, *who hath with-held the fruit of the womb?* Gen. xxx. 2. Can I give children? So, is a parent, in God's ſtead, to give grace? Who can help it, if a child, having the light of conſcience, Scripture, education, theſe three torches in his hand, yet runs wilfully into the deep ponds of ſin? Weep for thy child, pray for

for him; but do not ſin for him, *by diſcontent.*

3. Say not, you have brought forth a child for the devil; God can reduce him. He hath promiſed to *turn the heart of the children to their parents,* (Mal. iv. 6.) and to open ſprings of grace in the *deſart,* Iſa. xxxv. 6. When any child is going full-ſail to the devil, God can blow with a contrary wind of his Spirit, and alter his courſe. When Paul was breathing out perſecution againſt the Saints, and was ſailing hell-ward, God turns him another way. Before, he was going to Damaſcus; God ſends him to Ananias: before a perſecutor, now a preacher. Though our children are for the preſent fallen into the *devil's pound,* God can turn them from the power of Satan, (*Acts.* xxvi. 18.) and bring them in at the *twelfth* hour. Monica was weeping for her ſon Auguſtine; at laſt God gave him in, upon prayer; and he became a famous inſtrument in the church of God.

2. The ſecond branch of the objection is—"But, my huſband takes ill courſes. Where I looked for honey, behold a ſting!"

Answ. It is ſad to have the living and the dead tied together; yet, let not your heart fret with diſcontent: mourn for his ſin, but do not murmur. For—

1. God hath placed you in your relation; and you cannot be diſcontented, but you quarrel with God. What, for every

every croſs that befals us, ſhall we call the infinite wiſdom of God in queſtion? O the blaſphemy of our hearts!

2. God can make you a gainer by your huſband's ſin. Perhaps you had never been ſo good, if he had not been ſo bad. The fire burns hotteſt in the coldeſt climate: God often, by a divine power, turns the ſins of others to our good, and makes our *maladies* our *medicines*. The more profane the huſband is, oft the more holy the wife grows; the more earthly he is, the more heavenly ſhe grows. God makes ſometimes the huſband's ſin a ſpur to the wife's grace. His exorbitances are as a pair of bellows to blow up the flame of her zeal and devotion the more.

Is it not thus? Doth not thy huſband's wickedneſs ſend thee to prayer? Thou, perhaps, hadſt never prayed ſo much, if he had not ſinned ſo much: his deadneſs quickens thee the more; the ſtone of his heart is an hammer to break thy heart. The Apoſtle ſaith—*The unbelieving wife is ſanctified by the unbelieving huſband*, 1 Cor. vii. 14. But in this ſenſe, the believing wife is ſanctified by the unbelieving huſband. She grows better: his ſin is a whetſtone to her grace, and a *medicine* for her ecurity.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

The fourth Apology answered.

THE next apology that Diſcontent makes is—"But my friends have dealt very unkindly with me, and proved falſe."

ANSW. It is ſad, when a friend proves like a *brook in ſummer*, Job, vi. 15. The traveller, being parched with heat, comes to the brook, hoping to refreſh himſelf; but the brook is dried up: yet be content.

1. You are not alone: others of the ſaints have been betrayed by friends; and, when they have leaned upon them, they have been as a *foot out of joint*. This was true in the type David, *Pſal.* liii. 12, 13. "It was not an enemy reproached me; but it was thou, a man, my equal, my guide, and my acquaintance: we took ſweet counſel together." And, in the antitype Chriſt, he was betrayed by a friend; and why ſhould we think it ſtrange to have the ſame meaſure dealt unto us as Jeſus Chriſt had? *The ſervant is not above his maſter.*

2. A Chriſtian may often read his ſin in his puniſhment. Hath not he dealt treacherouſly with God? How oft hath he grieved the Comforter, broken his vows; and, through unbelief, ſided with Satan a-

gainſt

gainſt God? How oft hath he abuſed Love; taking the jewels of God's mercies, and making a golden calf of them, ſerving his own luſts? How oft hath he made the free grace of God, which ſhould have been a bolt to keep out ſin, rather a key to open the door to it? Theſe wounds hath the Lord received *in the houſe of his friend*, Zach. xiii 6. Look upon the unkindneſs of thy friend, and mourn for thy own unkindneſs againſt God. Shall a Chriſtian condemn that in another, which he hath been too guilty of himſelf?

3. Hath thy friend proved treacherous? Perhaps you did repoſe too much confidence in him. If you lay more weight upon an houſe than the pillars will bear, it muſt needs break. God ſaith—*Truſt ye not in a friend*, Micah, vii. 5. Perhaps you did put more truſt in him, than you did dare to put in God. Friends are as *Venice-glaſſes*: we may uſe them; but, if we lean too hard upon them, they will break. Behold matter of humility, but not of ſullenneſs and diſcontent.

4. You have a Friend in heaven who will never fail you. *There is a Friend*, ſaith Solomon, *that ſticketh cloſer than a brother*, Prov. xviii. 14. Such a friend is God. He is very ſtudious and inquiſitive in our behalf; he hath a debating with himſelf, a conſulting and projecting how he may do us good. He is the *beſt friend*, which may

may give contentment in the midſt of all diſcourteſies of friends.

Conſider, 1. He is a *loving Friend*. God is love, 1 *John*, iv. 16. Hence he is ſaid ſometimes to engrave us on the *palms of his hands*, (Iſai. xlix. 16.) that we may be never out of his eye; and to carry us *in his boſom*, (Iſa. xl. 11.) near to his heart. There is no ſtop or ſtint in his love; but, as the River Nile, it overflows all the banks: his love is as far *beyond* our thoughts, as it is above our deſerts. O the infinite love of God, in giving the Son of his love to be made *fleſh*, which was more than if all the angels had been made *worms!* God, in giving Chriſt to us, gave his very heart to us. Here is love penciled out in all it's glory, and engraven as with the *point of a diamond!* All other love is hatred, in compariſon of the love of our Friend.

2. He is a *careful* Friend—*He careth for you*, 1 Peter, v. 7.

1. He minds and tranſacts our buſineſs as his own; he accounts his people's intereſts and concernments as his intereſt.

2. He provides for us grace, to enrich us; glory, to ennoble us. It was David's complaint—*No man careth for my ſoul*, Pſa. clxii. 4. A Chriſtian hath a Friend that cares for him.

3. He is a *prudent Friend*, Dan. ii. 20. A friend may ſometimes err through ignorance

rance or miſtake, and give his friend poiſon inſtead of ſugar; but *God is wiſe in heart*, Job, ix. 4. He is ſkilful as well as faithful; he knows what our diſeaſe is, and what phyſick is moſt proper to apply: he knows what will do us good, and what wind will be beſt to carry us to heaven.

4. He is a *faithful* Friend, *Deut.* vii. 9. 10. And he is faithful, 1. in his promiſes—*In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promiſed*, Tit. i. 2. Iſai. lxiii. 8. God's people are *children that will not lie*; but God is a God that *cannot lie*. He will not deceive the faith of his people; nay, he cannot. He is called *the Truth*; he can as well ceaſe to be God, as ceaſe to be true. The Lord may ſometimes *change* his promiſe—as when he converts a temporal promiſe into a ſpiritual—but he can never *break* his promiſe.

5. He is a *compaſſionate Friend*. Hence, in Scripture, we read of *the yearnings of his bowels*, Jer. xxxi. 20. God's friendſhip is nothing elſe but compaſſion; for there is naturally no *affection* in us to deſire his friendſhip, nor any *goodneſs* in us to deſerve it: the load-ſtone is in himſelf. When we were full of *blood*, he was full of *bowels*; when we were enemies, he ſent an Embaſſage of peace: when our hearts were turned back from God, his heart was turned towards us. O the tenderneſs and ſympathy

thy of our Friend in heaven! We ourſelves have ſome relentings of heart to thoſe which are in miſery; but it is God who begets all the mercies and bowels that are in us; therefore he is called the *Father of mercies*, 2 Cor. i. 3.

6. He is a *conſtant Friend. His compaſſions fail not*, Lam. iii. 22. Friends do often, in adverſity, drop off as leaves in autumn. Theſe are rather flatterers than friends. Joab was, for a time, faithful to King David's houſe: he went not after Abſalom's treaſon; but, within a while, proved falſe to the crown, and went after the treaſon of Adonijah, 1 *Kings*, i. 7. God is a Friend for ever—*Having loved his own, he loved them to the end*, John, xiii. 1. What, though I am deſpiſed, yet God loves me: what, though my friends caſt me off, yet God loves me. He loves to the end; and there is no end of that love.

This, methinks, in caſe of diſcourteſies and unkindneſſes, is enough to charm down diſcontent.

SECT. V.

The fifth Apology anſwered.

THE next apology is—"I am under great reproaches." Let not this diſcontent. For—

1. It is a ſign there is ſome good in thee. What evil have I done, that this bad man

man commends me? The *applauſe* of the wicked uſually denotes ſome evil, and their *cenſure* imports ſome good, *Pſal.* xvi. 20. David wept and faſted, and that was *turned to his reproach*, Pſal. lxix. 10. As we muſt paſs to heaven through the *pikes* of ſuffering, ſo through the clouds of reproach.

2. If your reproach be for God, as David's was—*For thy ſake I have borne reproach*, (Pſa. lxix. 7.) then it is rather matter of *triumph*, than dejection. Chriſt doth not ſay, when you are reproached, *be diſcontented*, but *rejoice*, Matt. v. 12. Wear your reproach as a diadem of honour; for now a *Spirit of Glory reſts upon you*, 1 Pet. iv. 14. Put your reproaches into the inventory of your riches: ſo did Moſes, *Heb.* xi. 26. It ſhould be a Chriſtian's ambition to wear his Saviour's livery, though it be ſprinkled with blood, and ſullied with diſgrace.

3. God will do us *good* by reproach, as David ſaid of Shimei his curſing—"It may be, the Lord will requite good for his curſing this day," 2 *Sam.* xvi. 12. This puts us upon ſearching out ſin. A child of God labours to read his ſin in every ſtone of reproach that is caſt at him; beſides, now we have an opportunity to exerciſe patience and humility.

4. Jeſus Chriſt was content to be reproached for us—*He deſpiſed the ſhame of*

the

the croſs, Heb. xi. 2. It may amaze us to think, that he who was God could endure to be ſpit upon, to be crowned with thorns *in a kind of jeer*; and, when he was ready to *bow* his head upon the croſs, to have the Jews, in ſcorn, *wag their* heads, and ſay—*He ſaved others, himſelf he cannot ſave:* the *ſhame* of the croſs was as much as the *blood* of the croſs; his *name* was crucified before his *body*. The ſharp arrows of *reproach*, that the world did ſhoot at Chriſt, went deeper into his heart than the ſpear. His ſuffering was ſo ignominious, that, as if the ſun did bluſh to behold it, it withdrew it's bright beams, and maſqued itſelf with a cloud; and well it might, when the Sun of righteouſneſs was in an eclipſe! All this contumely and reproach did the God of glory *endure*, or rather *deſpiſe*, for us. Oh, then! let us be content to have our names eclipſed for Chriſt; let not reproach lie at our heart, but let us bind it as a crown about our head. Alas! what is reproach? This is but *ſmall ſhot*; how will men ſtand in the mouth of the cannon? Thoſe who are diſcontented at a reproach, will be offended at a faggot.

5. Is not many a man contented to ſuffer reproach for maintaining his luſt? and ſhall not we for maintaining the truth? Some *glory in that which is their ſhame*, (Phil. iii. 19.) and ſhall we be aſhamed of that which is our glory? Be not troubled

at

at theſe petty things: he, whoſe heart is once divinely touched with the loadſtone of God's Spirit, doth account it his honour to be diſhonoured for Chriſt, (*Acts*, xv. 4.) and doth as much deſpiſe the world's cenſure, as he doth their praiſe.

6. We live in an age wherein men dare reproach God himſelf. The *divinity* of the Son of God is blaſphemouſly reproached by the Socinian; the bleſſed *Bible* is reproached by the Anti-ſcripturiſt, as if it were but a *legend of lies*, and every man's faith a fable; the *Juſtice* of God is called to the bar of Reaſon by the Arminian; the *Wiſdom* of God, in his providential actings, is taxed by the Atheiſt; the *Ordinances* of God are decryed by the Formaliſt, as being too heavy a burden for a *free-born* conſcience, and too low and carnal for a ſublime ſeraphick Spirit; the *Ways* of God, which have the majeſty of holineſs ſhining in them, are calumniated by the Profane; the mouths of men are open againſt God, as if he were an *hard Maſter*, and the path of Religion too ſtrict and ſevere. If men cannot give God a good word, ſhall we be diſcontented or troubled that they ſpeak hardly of us? Such as labour to bury the glory of religion, ſhall we wonder that their throats are *open ſepulchres*, (Rom. iii. 13.) to bury our good name? Oh! let us be contented, while we are in God's ſcouring-houſe, to have our names ſullied a little: the

the blacker we ſeem to be here, the brighter ſhall we ſhine when God hath ſet us upon the celeſtial ſhelf.

SECT. VI.

The ſixth Apology anſwered.

THE ſixth apology that Diſcontent makes, is diſreſpect in the world—"I have not that eſteem from men, as is ſuitable to my quality and graces." And doth this trouble? Conſider—

1. The world is an unequal judge; as it is full of *change*, ſo of *partiality*. The World gives her *reſpects*, as ſhe doth her *places of preferment*, more by favour often, than deſert. Haſt thou the ground of real worth in thee? that is beſt worth that is in him that *hath* it; honour is in him that *gives* it. Better deſerve reſpect, and not have it, than have it, and not deſerve it.

2. Haſt thou grace? God reſpects thee, and his judgment is beſt worth prizing. A believer is a perſon of honour, being *born of God*. Since thou waſt *precious* in mine eyes, *thou haſt been honourable, and I have loved thee*, Iſai. xliii. 4. Let the world think what they will of you; perhaps, in their eyes, you are a *caſt-away*; in God's eyes, a *dove*, (2 Can. ii. 14.) a *ſpouſe*,

(Can.

(Can. v. 1.) a *jewel*, (Mal. iii. 17.) others account you the dregs and off-ſcouring of the world, (1 *Cor.* iv. 14.) but God will give *whole kingdoms for your ranſom*, Iſai. xliii. 5. Let this content—"No matter with what oblique eyes I am looked upon in the world: if I am in Chriſt, God thinks well of me. It is better that God approve, than man applaud. What is a man the better, that his fellow-priſoners commend him, if his Judge condemn him? Oh! labour to keep in with God: prize his love. Let my fellow-ſubjects frown, I am contented, being a favourite of the King of heaven."

3. If we are the children of God, we muſt look for diſreſpect. A believer is *in* the world, but not *of* the world: we are here in a pilgrim condition, out of our own country; therefore muſt not look for the reſpects and acclamations of the world; it is ſufficient that we ſhall have honour in our own country, *Heb.* xiii. 14. It is dangerous to be the world's favourite.

4. Diſcontent, ariſing from diſreſpect, ſavours too much of pride: an humble Chriſtian hath a lower opinion of himſelf than others can have of him. He that is taken up about the thoughts of his ſins, and how he hath provoked God, he cries out as Agur—*I am more brutiſh than any man*, (Prov. xxx. 2.) and therefore is contented, though he be ſet *among the dogs of*

of the flock, Job, xxx. 1. Though he be low in the thoughts of others, yet he is thankful, that he is not laid *in the loweſt hell*, Pſal. lxxxvi. 13. A proud man ſets an high value upon himſelf; and is angry with others, becauſe they will not come up to his price. Take heed of pride. Oh! had others a window to look into thy breaſt, as Crates once expreſſed it, or did thy heart ſtand where thy face doth, thou wouldſt wonder to have ſo much reſpect.

SECT. VII.

The ſeventh Apology anſwered.

THE next Apology is—"I meet with very great ſufferings for the truth." Conſider—

1. Your *ſufferings* are not ſo great as your *ſins*. Put theſe two in the balance, and ſee which weighs heavieſt: where ſin lies heavy, ſufferings lie light. A carnal ſpirit makes more of his ſufferings, and leſs of his ſins; he looks upon one at the great end of the perſpective; but, upon the other, at the little end of the perſpective. The carnal heart cries out—"Take away the *frogs*;" but a gracious heart cries—"Take away the *iniquity*," 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. The one ſaith—"Never any one ſuffered as I have done:"

but the other ſaith—"Never any one ſinned as I have done," *Micah*, vii. 9.

2. Art thou under ſufferings? Thou haſt an opportunity to ſhew the valour and conſtancy of thy mind; ſome of God's ſaints would have accounted it a great favour to have been honoured with martyrdom. One ſaid—"I am in priſon, *ſtill* I am in priſon." Thou counteſt that a trouble, which others would have worn as an enſign of their glory.

3. Even thoſe who have gone only upon moral principles, have ſhewn much conſtancy and contentment in their ſufferings. Curtius, being bravely mounted, and in armour, threw himſelf into a great gulph, that the city of Rome might, according to the oracle, be delivered from the peſtilence; and we, having a divine oracle, *That they who kill the body, cannot hurt the ſoul*, ſhall we not, with much conſtancy and patience, devote ourſelves to injuries for religion, and rather ſuffer for the truth, than the truth ſuffer for us? The Decii, among the Romans, vowed themſelves to death, that their legions and ſoldiers might be crowned with the honour of the victory. O! what ſhould we be content to ſuffer, to make the truth victorious! Regulus, having ſworn that he would return to Carthage, though he knew there was a furnace heating for him there, yet, not daring to infringe his oath, he did adventure to go: we then, who

who are Chriſtians, having like one of old performed to the Lord, and cannot go back, ſhould rather chuſe to ſuffer, than violate our ſacred oath. Thus the bleſſed martyrs, with what courage and chearfulneſs did they yield up their ſouls to God? and when the fire was ſet to their bodies, yet their ſpirits were not at all fired with paſſion or diſcontent. Though others hurt the *body*, let them not the *mind*, through diſcontent. Shew, by your heroick courage, that you are above thoſe troubles which you cannot be without.

SECT. VIII.

The eighth Apology anſwered.

THE next Apology is—The proſperity of the wicked.

ANSW. I confeſs it is ſo often, that the evil enjoy all the good, and the good endure all the evil. David, though a good man, ſtumbled at this, and had like to have fallen, *Pſal.* lxxiii. 2. Well, be contented; for remember—

1. Theſe are not the only things, nor the beſt things; they are mercies without the pale; theſe are but acorns, with which God feeds ſwine: you, who are believers, have more choice fruit, the *olive*, the *pomegranate*, the fruit which grows on the *true*

Vine, Jeſus Chriſt; others have the fat of the earth, you have the dew of heaven; they have a ſouth land, you have thoſe ſprings of living water which are clarified with Chriſt's blood, and edulcorated with his love.

2. To ſee the wicked flouriſh, is matter rather of *pity* than envy; it is all the heaven they muſt have. *Woe to you rich men, for ye have received your conſolation*, Luke, vi. 24. Hence it was, that David made it his ſolemn prayer—*Deliver me from the wicked, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whoſe belly thou filleſt with thy hid treaſure*, Pſal. xvii. 14. The words, methinks, are David's *litany:* from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, *good Lord, deliver me.* When the wicked have eaten of their dainty diſhes, there comes in a ſad reckoning, which will ſpoil all. The world is firſt *muſical*, and then *tragical:* if you would have a man fry and blaze in hell, let him have enough of the *fat of the earth.* O remember! for every ſand of mercy that runs out to the wicked, God puts a drop of wrath into his vial; therefore, as that ſoldier ſaid to his fellow—"Do you envy me my grapes? They coſt me dear: I muſt die for them." So I ſay—"Do you envy the wicked?" Alas! their proſperity is like Haman's banquet before execution. If a man were to be hanged,

hanged, would one envy to ſee him walk to the gallows through pleaſant fields, and fine galleries, or to ſee him go up the ladder in cloth of gold? The wicked may flouriſh in their bravery awhile; but, when *they flouriſh as the graſs, it is that they ſhall be deſtroyed for ever*, Pſal. xcii. 7. This proud graſs ſhall be mown down. Whatever a ſinner enjoys, he hath a curſe with it, (*Mal.* ii. 2.) And ſhall we envy? What if poiſoned bread be given to dogs? The long furrows in the backs of the godly have a *ſeed of bleſſing* in them, when the table of the wicked becomes a ſnare, and their honour their halter.

SECT. IX.

The ninth Apology anſwered.

II. THE next Apology that Diſcontent makes for itſelf, is—*The evil of the times.* "The times are full of hereſy and impiety, and this is that which troubles me." This apology conſiſts of two branches, to which I ſhall anſwer after it's kind; and—

1. The times are full of hereſy. This is indeed ſad! when the devil cannot by violence deſtroy the Church, he endeavours to poiſon it; when he cannot, with Sampſon's fox-tails, ſet the corn on fire, then he ſows tares: as he labours to deſtroy

the peace of the Church by *diviſion*, ſo the truth of it by *error*. We may cry out with Seneca—"We live in times wherein there is a ſluice open to all novel opinions, and every man's *opinion* is his *bible*. Well this may make us mourn; but let us not murmur through diſcontent." Conſider—

1. Error makes a diſcovery of men.

1. *Bad men.* Error diſcovers ſuch as are tainted and corrupt. When the leproſy brake forth in the forehead, then was the *leper* diſcovered. Error is a ſpiritual baſtard; the Devil is the father, and Pride the mother. You never knew an erroneous man, but he was a proud man. Now, it is good that ſuch men ſhould be laid open; to the intent, firſt, that God's righteous judgments upon them may be adored; (2 *Theſ.* ii. 12.) ſecondly, that others, who are free, be not infected. If a man have the plague, it is well it breaks forth. For my part, I would avoid an heretick as I would avoid the Devil, for he is ſent on his errand. I appeal to you, if there were a tavern in this city, where, under a pretence of ſelling wine, many hogſheads of poiſon were to be ſold, were it not well that others ſhould know of it, that they might not buy? It is good that thoſe who have poiſoned opinions ſhould be known, that the people of God may come not near either the ſcent or taſte of that poiſon.

2. Error

2. Error is a *touch-ſtone*, to diſcover *good men*; it tries the gold: *There muſt be hereſies, that they which are approved may be made manifeſt*, 1 Cor. xi. 14. Thus our love to Chriſt, and zeal for truth, doth appear. God ſhews who are the living fiſh, viz. ſuch as ſwim againſt the ſtream; who are the ſound ſheep, viz. ſuch as feed in the green paſtures of the ordinances; who are the doves, viz. ſuch as live in the beſt air, where the Spirit breathes. God ſets a garland of honour upon theſe—*Theſe are they which came out of great tribulation*, Rev. vii. 14. So theſe are they that have oppoſed the errors of the times; theſe are they that have preſerved the virginity of their conſcience, who have kept their judgment ſound, and their heart ſoft. God will have a trophy of honour ſet upon ſome of his ſaints; they ſhall be renowned for their ſincerity, being like the cypreſs, which keeps it's greenneſs and freſhneſs in the winter ſeaſon.

2. Be not ſinfully diſcontented; for God can make the errors of the Church advantageous to truth. Thus the truths of God have come to be more beaten out and confirmed: as it is in *law*, one man laying a falſe title to a piece of land, the true title hath, by this means, been the more ſearched into, and ratified. Some had never ſo ſtudied to defend the truth by *Scripture*, if others had not endeavoured

to overthrow it by *ſophiſtry:* all the miſts and fogs of error that have riſen out of the bottomleſs pit, have made the glorious Sun *of Truth* to ſhine ſo much the brighter. Had not Arius and Sabellius broached thoſe damnable errors, the truth of thoſe queſtions about the bleſſed *Trinity* had never been ſo diſcuſſed and defended by Athanaſius, Auguſtine, and others; had not the Devil brought in ſo much of his *princely darkneſs*, the champions for truth had never run ſo faſt to Scripture to light their lamps. So that God, who hath a *wheel within a wheel*, over-rules theſe things wiſely, and turns them to the beſt. Truth is an heavenly plant, that ſettles by ſhaking.

3. God raiſeth the price of his truth the more; the very ſhreds and filings of truth are venerable. When there is much counterfeit metal abroad, we prize the true gold the more: the pure wine of truth is never more precious, than when unſound doctrines are broached and vented.

Error makes us more thankful to God for the jewel of truth. When you ſee another infected with the plague, how thankful are you that God hath freed you from the infection! When we ſee others have the *leproſy in the head*, how thankful are we to God that he hath not given us over to believe a lye, and ſo be damned! It is a good uſe that may be made even of the

the error of the times, when it makes us more humble and thankful, adoring the free grace of God, who hath kept us from drinking of that deadly poiſon.

2. The ſecond branch of the apology that Diſcontent makes, is the *impiety of the times*. "I live and converſe among the profane. *O that I had wings like a dove, that I might fly away, and be at reſt*," Pſa. lv. 6.

ANSW. It is indeed ſad to be mixed with the wicked. *David beheld the tranſgreſſors, and was grieved*, (Pſal. cxix. 58.) and Lot, who was a bright ſtar in a dark night, was *vexed*; or, as the word in the original may bear, *wearied out with the unclean converſation of the wicked*, 2 Pet. ii. 7. He made the ſins of Sodom *ſpears* to pierce his own ſoul. We ought, if there be any ſpark of divine Love in us, to be very ſenſible of the ſins of others, and to have our hearts bleed for them; yet, let us not break forth in murmuring or diſcontent, knowing that God, in his providence, hath permitted it; and, ſurely, not without ſome reaſons.

or—

1. The Lord makes the wicked an hedge to defend the godly: the wiſe God often makes thoſe who are *wicked* and *peaceable*, a means to ſafeguard his people from thoſe who are *wicked* and *cruel*. The King of Babylon kept Jeremiah, and gave ſpecial order for his looking to, that he did want nothing, *Jer.* xxxv. 11, 12. God ſome-

times makes *brazen ſinners* to be *brazen walls* to defend his people.

2. God doth interline and mingle the wicked with the godly, that the godly may be a means to ſave the wicked. Such is the *beauty of holineſs*, that it hath a magnetical force in it, to allure and draw even the wicked. Sometimes God makes a believing huſband a means to convert an unbelieving wife; and, on the other hand—*What knoweſt thou, O wife, whether thou ſhalt ſave thy huſband? Or knoweſt thou, O man, whether thou ſhalt ſave thy wife?* 1 Cor. vii. 16. The godly, living among the wicked, by their prudent advice and pious example, have won them to the embracing of religion. If there were not ſome godly among the wicked, how in a probable way, without a miracle, can we imagine that the wicked ſhould be converted? Thoſe who are now ſhining ſaints in heaven, ſometimes *ſerved divers luſts*, Tit. iii. 3. Paul, once a perſecutor; Auguſtine, once a manichee; Luther, once a monk; but, by the ſevere and holy carriage of the godly, were converted to the faith.

SECT.

SECT. X.

The tenth Apology answered.

THE next Apology that Diſcontent makes, is—Lowneſs of parts and gifts.

"I cannot," ſaith the Chriſtian, "diſcourſe with that fluency, nor pray with that elegancy, as others."

ANSW. 1. *Grace is beyond gifts.* Thou compareſt thy grace with another's gifts—there is a vaſt difference. Grace, without gifts, is infinitely better than gifts without grace. In religion, the *vitals* are beſt: gifts are a more extrinſical and common work of the Spirit, which is incident to reprobates; grace is a more diſtinguiſhing work, and is a jewel hung only upon the Elect. Haſt thou the *ſeed of God*, the *holy anointing?* Be content.

1. Thou ſayeſt thou canſt not diſcourſe with that fluency as others.

ANSW. Experiments in religion are above notions, and *impreſſions* beyond *expreſſions*. Judas, no doubt, could make a learned diſcourſe of Chriſt; but well fare the woman in the Goſpel, that felt virtue coming out of him, *Luke*, viii. 47. A ſanctified heart is better than a ſilver tongue. There is as much difference between gifts and

grace, as between a tulip painted on the wall and one growing in the garden.

2. Thou ſayeſt, thou canſt not pray with that elegancy as others.

ANSW. Prayer is a matter more of the *heart* than the *head*. In prayer, it is not ſo much *fluency* prevails as *fervency*, (Jam. v. 16.) nor is God ſo much taken with the elegancy of ſpeech, as the efficacy of the Spirit. Humility is better than volubility: here the *mourner* is the *orator*; ſighs and groans are the beſt rhetorick.

2. Be not diſcontented; for God doth uſually proportion a man's parts to the place where he calls him: ſome are ſet in a higher ſphere and function, their place requires more parts and abilities; but the moſt inferior member is uſeful in it's place, and ſhall have a power delegated for the diſcharge of it's peculiar office.

SECT. XI.

The eleventh Apology anſwered.

THE next Apology is—*The troubles of the Church.* "Alas! my diſquiet and diſcontent is not ſo much for myſelf, as the publick. The Church of God ſuffers."

ANSW. I confeſs it is ſad; and we ought for this *to hang our harp upon the willow*, Pſal.

Pſal. cxxxvii. He is a wooden leg in Chriſt's body, that is not ſenſible of the ſtate of the body. As a Chriſtian muſt not be *proud fleſh*, ſo neither *dead fleſh*. When the Church of God ſuffers, he muſt ſympathize: *Jeremiah wept for the virgin daughter of Sion*. We muſt feel our brethren's hard cords through our ſoft beds: in muſick, if one ſtring be touched, all the reſt ſound. When God ſtrikes upon our brethren, *our bowels muſt ſound as an harp*, (Iſai. xvi. 11.) be ſenſible, but do not give way to diſcontent. For conſider—

1. *God ſits at the ſtern of his Church*, Pſa. xlvi. 5. Sometimes it is as a ſhip toſſed upon the waves—*O thou afflicted and toſſed!* Iſai. liv. 12. But cannot God bring this ſhip to heaven, though it meet with a ſtorm upon the ſea? The ſhip in the Goſpel was toſſed, becauſe *ſin* was in it; but it was not overwhelmed, becauſe Chriſt was in it. Chriſt is in the ſhip of his Church, fear not ſinking: the Church's anchor is caſt in heaven. Do not we think God loves his Church, and takes as much care of it as we can? The names of the Twelve Tribes were on Aaron's *breaſt*; ſignifying how near to God's heart his people are. They are his *portion*, (Deut. xxxii. 9.) and ſhall that be loſt? His *glory*, (Iſai. xlvi. 13.) and ſhall that be finally eclipſed? No, certainly. God can deliver his Church not only *from*, but *by*, oppoſition. The Church's

Church's pangs ſhall help forward her deliverance.

2. *God hath always propagated religion by ſufferings.* The foundation of the Church hath been laid *in blood*; and theſe ſanguine ſhowers have ever made it more fruitful. Cain put the knife to Abel's throat, and ever ſince the Church's veins have bled; but ſhe is like the *Vine*, which by bleeding grows; and like the palm-tree, which may have this motto—*Percuſſa reſurgit*—the more weight is laid upon it, the higher it riſeth. The holineſs and patience of the ſaints under their perſecutions, hath much added both to the *growth* of religion and the *crown*. Baſil and Tertullian obſerve of the primitive martyrs, that divers of the Heathens, ſeeing their zeal and conſtancy, turned Chriſtians. Religion is that *phœnix* which hath always revived and flouriſhed *in the aſhes* of holy men. Iſaiah ſawn aſunder; Peter crucified at Jeruſalem with his head downwards; Cyprian, Biſhop of Carthage, and Polycarp of Smyrna, were both martyred for religion: yet evermore the truth hath been *ſealed* by blood, and glorioufly diſperſed; whereupon Julian did forbear to perſecute, not out of piety, but envy; becauſe the Church grew ſo faſt and multiplied, as Nazianzen well obſerves.

SECT.

SECT. XII.

The twelfth Apology anſwered.

THE twelfth Apology that Diſcontent makes for itſelf, is this—"It is not my trouble that troubles me, but it is my ſins that do diſquiet and diſcontent."

ANSW. Be ſure it be ſo; do not prevaricate with God and thy own ſoul. In true mourning for ſin, when the preſent ſuffering is removed, yet the ſorrow is not removed; but ſuppoſe the apology be real, and *ſin* is the ground of your diſcontent, yet I anſwer, a man's diſquiet about ſin may be beyond it's bounds in theſe three caſes—

1. When it is *diſheartening*; that is, when it ſets up ſin above mercy. If Iſrael had only pored upon their ſting, and not looked up to the *Brazen Serpent*, they had never been healed. That ſorrow for ſin, which drives us away from God, is not without ſin; for there is more *deſpair* in it than *remorſe*: the ſoul hath ſo many tears in it's eyes, that it cannot ſee Chriſt. Sorrow, as ſorrow, doth not ſave—that were to make a Chriſt of our tears, but is uſeful as it is preparatory in the ſoul—making ſin *vile*, and Chriſt *precious*. Oh! look up to the Brazen Serpent, *the Lord Jeſus*: a ſight

a ſight of his blood will revive; the medicine of his *merits* is broader than our ſore.

It is Satan's policy, either to keep us from ſeeing our ſins; or, if we will needs ſee them, that we may *be ſwallowed up of ſorrow*, Cor. ii. 27. Either he would *ſtupify* us, or *affright* us; either keep the glaſs of the Law from our eyes, or elſe pencil out our ſins in ſuch crimſon colours, that we may ſink in the *quick-ſands* of deſpair.

2. When ſorrow is *indiſpoſing*, it untunes the heart for prayer, meditation, holy conference; it cloiſters up the ſoul. This is not ſorrow, but rather ſullenneſs, and doth render a man not ſo much *penitential* as *cynical*.

3. When it is *out of ſeaſon*, God bids us *rejoice*, and we *hang our harps upon the willows*; he bids us *truſt*, and we caſt ourſelves down, and are brought even to the margin of deſpair. If Satan cannot keep us from mourning, he will be ſure to put us upon it when it is leaſt in ſeaſon.

When God calls us, in a ſpecial manner, to be thankful for mercy, and put on our white robes, then Satan will be putting us into mourning; and, inſtead of a *garment* of *praiſe*, clothe us with *a ſpirit of heavineſs*; ſo God loſeth the acknowledgment of a mercy, and we the comfort.

If

If thy ſorrow hath tuned and fitted thee for Chriſt, if it hath raiſed in thee high prizings of him, ſtrong hungerings after him, ſweet delight in him; this is as much as God requires, and a Chriſtian doth but ſin to vex and torture himſelf further upon the wreck of his own diſcontent.

And thus, I hope, I have anſwered the moſt material objections and apologies which this ſin of Diſcontent doth make for itſelf. I ſee no reaſon why a Chriſtian ſhould be diſcontented, unleſs for his diſcontent. Let me, in the next place, propound ſomething which may be both as a loadſtone and a whetſtone to Contentment.

CHAP. XI.

Divine Motives to Contentment.

AND ſo I proceed to the arguments or motives that may quicken to contentment.

SECT. I.

The firſt Argument to Contentment.

1. CONSIDER the excellency of it. Contentment is a flower that doth not grow in every garden; it teacheth a man how, in the midſt of want, to abound.

bound. You would think it were excellent if I could preſcribe a receipt or antidote againſt poverty: but, behold, here is that which is more excellent, for a man to want, and yet have enough: this, alone, contentment of ſpirit brings. Contentment is a remedy againſt all our troubles, a relief for all our burdens; it is the *cure* of *care*.

Contentment, though it be not properly a *grace*—it is rather a *diſpoſition of mind*—yet in it there is an happy temperature and mixture of all the graces. It is a moſt precious compound, which is made up of *faith, patience, meekneſs, humility, &c.* which are the ingredients put into it. Now there are, in *ſpecie*, theſe ſeven rare excellences in contentment—

1. A contented Chriſtian *carries heaven about him*; for what is heaven but that ſweet repoſe and full contentment that the ſoul ſhall have in God? In contentment there is the firſt-fruits of heaven.

There are two things in a contented ſpirit which makes it like heaven.

1. *God is there.* Something of God is to be ſeen in that heart. A diſcontented Chriſtian is like a rough, tempeſtuous ſea: when the water is rough, you can ſee nothing there; but, when it is ſmooth and ſerene, then you may behold your face in the water, *Prov.* xxvii. 19. When the heart rageth through diſcontent, it is like a rough ſea; you can ſee nothing there unleſs paſſion

ſion and murmuring; there is nothing of God, nothing of heaven, in that heart: but, by virtue of contentment, it is like the ſea when it is ſmooth and calm; there is *a face ſhining there*; you may ſee ſomething of Chriſt in that heart, a repreſentation of all the graces.

2. *Reſt is there.* O what a ſabbath is kept in a contented heart! What an heaven! A contented Chriſtian is like Noah in the ark; though the ark was toſſed with waves, Noah could ſit and ſing in the ark. The ſoul, that is gotten into the *ark of contentment*, ſits quiet, and ſails above all the waves of trouble; he can ſing in this ſpiritual ark. The wheels of the chariot move, but the axle-tree ſtirs not; the circumference of the heavens is carried about the earth, but the earth moves not out of his centre. When we meet with motion and change in the creatures round about us, a contented ſpirit is not ſtirred or moved out of it's centre. The ſail of a mill moves with the wind, but the mill itſelf ſtands ſtill: an emblem of contentment. When our outward eſtate moves with the wind of providence, yet the heart is ſettled through holy contentment; and when others are, like quick-ſilver, ſhaking and trembling through diſquietude, the contented ſpirit can ſay as David—*O God, my heart is fixed! my heart is fixed!* Pſa. lvii. 7. What is this but a piece of heaven?

2. What-

2. Whatever is defective in the creature, is made up in *contentment*. A Chriſtian may want the comforts that others have, the land and poſſeſſions; but God hath diſtilled into his heart that contentment which is far better. In this ſenſe that is true of our Saviour—*He ſhall have, in this life, an hundred fold*, Matt. 19. Perhaps he that ventured all for Chriſt, never hath his houſe or land again; but God gives him a *contented ſpirit*; and this breeds ſuch joy in the ſoul, as is infinitely ſweeter than all his houſes and lands, which he left for Chriſt. It was ſad with David, in regard of his outward comforts, he being driven, as ſome think, from his kingdom; yet, in regard of that ſweet contentment which he found in God, he had more comfort than men uſed to have in time of *harveſt and vintage*, Pſa. iv. 7. One man hath houſe and lands to live upon; another hath nothing, only a ſmall trade, yet even that brings in a livelihood. A Chriſtian may have little in the world; but he drives the trade of contentment, and ſo he knows as well how to want as to *abound*. O the rare *art*, or rather *miracle*, of contentment! Wicked men are often diſquieted in the enjoyment of all things; the contented Chriſtian is well in the want of all things.

QUEST. But how comes a Chriſtian to be contented in the deficiency of outward comforts?

ANSW.

ANSW. A Chriſtian finds contentment diſtilled out of the breaſts of the Promiſes. He is poor in *purſe*, but rich in *promiſe*. There is one Promiſe brings much ſweet contentment into the ſoul: *They that ſeek the Lord, ſhall not want any good thing*, Pſa. xxxiv. 10. If the thing we deſire be good for us, we ſhall have it; if it be not good, then the not having it is good for us. The reſting ſatisfied with this Promiſe gives contentment.

3. Contentment makes a man in tune to ſerve God; it oils the wheels of the ſoul, and makes it more agile and nimble; it compoſeth the heart, and makes it fit for prayer, meditation, &c. How can he, that is in a paſſion of grief of diſcontent, *ſerve God without diſtraction?* 1 Cor. vii. 35. Contentment doth prepare and tune the heart. Firſt you prepare the violin, and wind up the ſtrings, ere you play a fit of muſick. When a Chriſtian's heart is wound up to this heavenly frame of contentment, then it is fit for duty. A diſcontented Chriſtian is like Saul, when the *evil ſpirit* came upon him. O what jarrings and diſcords doth he make in prayer! When an army is put into diſorder, it is not fit for battle: when the thoughts are ſcattered and diſtracted about the cares of this life, a man is not fit for devotion. Diſcontent takes the heart wholly off from God, and fixeth

fixeth it upon the preſent trouble; ſo that a man's mind is not upon his *prayer*, but upon his *croſs*.

Diſcontent doth disjoint the ſoul; and it is impoſſible now that a Chriſtian ſhould go ſo ſteadily and chearfully in God's ſervice. O how lame is his devotion! The diſcontented perſon gives God but *half* a duty; his religion is nothing but *bodily exerciſe*, it wants a ſoul to animate it. David would not offer that to God which *coſt him nothing*, (2 Sam. xxiv. 24.) where there is too much worldly *care*, there is too little ſpiritual *coſt*, in a duty. The diſcontented perſon doth his duties *by halves*; he is juſt like Ephraim, a *cake not turned*; (Hoſea, vii. 8.) he is a cake baked on one ſide; he gives God the *outſide*, but not the ſpiritual part; his heart is not in duty; he is baked on one ſide, but the other ſide is dough; and what profit is there of ſuch raw undigeſted ſervices? He that gives God only the ſkin of worſhip, what can he expect more than the ſhell of comfort? Contentment brings the heart into frame; and then only do we give God the flower and ſpirits of a duty, when the ſoul is compoſed: now a Chriſtian doth, his heart is intent and ſerious. There are ſome duties which we cannot perform as we ought without contentment: as—

1. *To rejoice in God.* How can he rejoice that is diſcontented? He is fitter for *repining* than *rejoicing*.

2. *To*

2. *To be thankful for mercy.* Can a diſcontented perſon be thankful? He can be *fretful*, not thankful.

3. *To juſtify God in his proceedings*, Ezra, ix. 29. How can he do this who is diſcontented with his condition? He will ſooner cenſure God's wiſdom, than clear his juſtice. O then how excellent is *contentment*, which doth prepare, and, as it were, ſtring the heart for duty! Indeed, contentment doth not only make our duties lively and agile, but *acceptable.* It is this that puts beauty and worth into them, for contentment *ſettles* the ſoul. Now, as it is with *milk*, when it is always ſtirring you can make nothing of it; but let it ſettle awhile, and then it turns to cream: when the heart is over-much ſtirred with diſquiet and diſcontent, you can make nothing of theſe duties; how thin, how fletten and jejune are they? But, when the heart is once ſettled by holy contentment, now there is ſome worth in our duties, now they turn to cream.

4. Contentment is the ſpiritual *arch* or pillar of the ſoul; it fits a man to *bear burdens:* he whoſe heart is ready to ſink under the leaſt ſin, by virtue of this hath a ſpirit invincible under ſufferings. A contented Chriſtian is like the camomile, the more it is trodden upon, the more it grows: as phyſick works diſeaſes out of the body, ſo doth contentment work trouble out of the

the heart. Thus it argues—"If I am under reproach, God can vindicate me; if I am in want, God can relieve me. *Ye ſhall not ſee wind or rain, yet the valley ſhall be filled with water,*" 2 Kings, iii. 17. Thus holy contentment keeps the heart from fainting. In the autumn, when the fruit and leaves are blown off, ſtill there is ſap in the root: when there is an autumn upon our external felicity, and the leaves of our eſtate drop off, ſtill there is the ſap of contentment in the heart; and a Chriſtian hath life inwardly, when his outward comforts do not bloſſom. The contented heart is never out of heart. Contentment is a golden ſhield, that doth beat back diſcouragements. *Humility* is like to the net, which keeps the ſoul down, when it is riſing through paſſion; and *contentment* is the cork which keeps the heart up when it is ſinking through diſcouragement. Contentment is the great under-prop; it is like the *beam* which bears whatever weight is laid upon it; nay, it is like a *rock* that breaks the waves.

It is ſtrange to obſerve the ſame affliction lying upon two men, how differently they carry themſelves under it. The contented Chriſtian is like Sampſon, that carried away the gates of the city upon his back, (*Judges*, xvi. 3.) he can go away with his croſs chearfully, and make nothing of it; the other is like Iſſachar, couching down under his burden, *Gen.* xlix. 14. The reaſon

reaſon is, the one is content, and that breeds courage; the other diſcontent, and that breeds fainting. Diſcontent ſwells the grief, and grief breaks the heart. When this ſacred ſinew of contentment begins to ſhrink, we go limping under our afflictions. We know not what burdens God may exerciſe us with; let us therefore preſerve contentment: as our *contentment*, ſuch will be our *courage*. David, with his five ſtones and his ſling, defied Goliah, and overcame him. Get but contentment into the ſling of your heart, and with this ſacred ſtone you may both defy the world, and conquer it; you may break thoſe afflictions which elſe will break you.

5. A fifth excellency is—Contentment prevents many *ſins* and *temptations*.

1. It prevents many *ſins*. Where there wants contentment, there wants no ſin; diſcontentedneſs with our condition is a ſin that doth not go alone, but is like the firſt link of the chain, which draws all the other links along with it. In particular, there are two things which contentment prevents—

1. *Impatience*. Diſcontent and Impatience are two twins: *This evil is of the Lord, why ſhould I wait any longer?* (2 Kings, vi. xxxiii.) as if God were ſo tied, that he muſt give us the mercy juſt when we deſire. Impatience is no ſmall ſin, as will appear if you conſider whence it ariſeth: As—

1. It is for want of faith. Faith gives a right notion of God; it is an intelligent grace; it believes that God's wiſdom tempers, and his love ſweetens, all ingredients; this works patience—*Shall I not drink the cup which my Father hath given me?* Impatience is the daughter of Infidelity. If a patient hath an ill opinion of the phyſician, and conceits that he comes to poiſon him, he will take none of his receipts. When we have a prejudice againſt God, and conceit that he comes to kill us, and undo us, then we ſtorm, and cry out through impatience. We are like a fooliſh man, (it is Chryſoſtom's *ſimile*) that cries out—"Away with the plaſter!" though it be in order to a cure. Is it not better that the plaſter make us ſmart a little, than the wound feſter and rankle?

2. Impatience is for want of love to God. We will bear his reproofs whom we love, not only patiently, but thankfully. *Love thinks no evil*, 1 Cor. xiii. 5. It puts the faireſt and moſt candid gloſs upon the actions of a friend—*Love covers evil.* If it were poſſible for God in the leaſt manner to err, (which were blaſphemy to think) love would cover that error. Love takes every thing in the beſt ſenſe; it makes us bear any ſtroke—*It endureth all things*; (1 Cor. xiii. 7.) had we love to God, we ſhould have patience.

3. *Impa-*

3. *Impatience* is for want of *humility*. The impatient man was never humbled under the burden of ſin: he that ſtudies his ſins, the numberleſs number of them, how they are twiſted together, and ſadly accented, is patient, and ſaith—*I will bear the indignation of the Lord, becauſe I have ſinned againſt him*, Micah, vii. 9. The greater noiſe drowns the leſſer: when the ſea roars, the rivers are ſtill. He that lets his thoughts expatiate about ſin, is both ſilent and amazed; he wonders it is no worſe with him. How great, then, is this ſin of Impatience! and how excellent is *Contentment*, which is a counterpoiſe againſt this ſin! The contented Chriſtian, believing that God doth all in love, is patient, and hath not one word to ſay, unleſs to juſtify God, *Pſal.* li. 4. That is the firſt ſin which contentment prevents.

2. It prevents *murmuring*; a ſin which is a degree higher than the other. Murmuring is a quarrelling with God, and inveighing againſt him—*They ſpeak againſt God*, Numb. xxi. 5. The murmurer ſaith, interpretatively, that God hath not dealt well with him, and he hath deſerved better from him. The murmurer *chargeth God with folly*. This is the language, or rather *blaſphemy*, of a murmuring ſpirit—God might have been a wiſer and a better God! The murmurer is a mutineer. The Iſraelites are called, in the ſame text, *murmurers*

and *rebels*; (Numb. xvii. 10.) and is not *rebellion as the ſin of witchcraft?* Thou that art a *murmurer*, art in the account of God as a *witch*, a *ſorcerer*, as one that deals with the devil. This is a ſin of the firſt magnitude: murmuring often ends in curſing. Micha's mother fell to curſing when the *talents of ſilver were taken away*, Judg. xvii. 2. So doth the murmurer, when a part of his eſtate is taken away. Our *murmuring* is the devil's *muſick*; this is that ſin which God cannot bear—*How long ſhall I bear with this people that murmur againſt me?* Numb. xiv. 7. It is a ſin which whets the ſword againſt a people; it is a land-deſtroying ſin—*Murmur ye not, as ſome of them alſo murmured, and were deſtroyed of the deſtroyer*, 1 Cor. x. 10. It is a ripening ſin: this, without God's mercy, will haſten England's funeral. O then, how excellent is contentment, which prevents this ſin! To be contented, and yet murmur, is a ſoleciſm. A contented Chriſtian doth acquieſce in his preſent condition, and doth not murmur, but admire. Herein appears the excellency of contentment: it is a ſpiritual antidote againſt ſin.

2. Contentment prevents many temptations. Diſcontent is a devil that is always tempting. 1. It puts a man upon *indirect means*. He that is poor and diſcontented, will attempt any thing; he will go to the devil

devil for riches: he that is proud and diſcontented, will hang himſelf, as Achitophel did, when his counſel was rejected. Satan takes great advantage of our diſcontent; he loves to fiſh in theſe troubled waters. Diſcontent doth both eclipſe reaſon, and weaken faith; and it is Satan's policy, he doth uſually break over the hedge where it is weakeſt. Diſcontent makes a breach in the ſoul; and uſually at this breach the devil enters by temptation, and ſtorms the ſoul. How eaſily can the devil, by his *logick*, diſpute a diſcontented Chriſtian into ſin? He forms ſuch a ſyllogiſm as this: "He that is in want, muſt ſtudy ſelf-preſervation. But you are now in want, therefore you ought to ſtudy ſelf-preſervation." Hereupon, to make good his *concluſion*, he tempts to the forbidden fruit, not diſtinguiſhing between what is *needful* and what is *lawful*. "What," ſaith he, "doſt thou want a livelihood? Never be ſuch a fool as to ſtarve. Take *the riſing ſide* at a venture, be it good or bad: *Eat the bread of deceit, drink the wine of violence.*" Thus you ſee how the diſcontented man is a prey to that ſad temptation, *to ſteal and take God's name in vain*, Prov. xxx. 9. Contentment is a ſhield againſt temptation; for he that is contented, knows as well how to *want* as to *abound*.

He will not ſin to get a living: though the *bill of fare* grows ſhort, he is content.

He lives, as the birds of the air, upon God's providence; and doubts not but he ſhall have enough to pay for his paſſage to heaven.

4. Diſcontent tempts a man to *atheiſm* and *apoſtacy*. "Sure," ſaith Diſcontent, "there is no God to take care of things here below! Would he ſuffer them to be in want, who have *walked mournfully before him?*" Mal. iii. 14. "Throw off Chriſt's livery; deſiſt from thy religion." Thus Job's wife, being diſcontented with her condition, ſaith to her huſband—*Doſt thou ſtill retain thy integrity?* (Job, ii. 9.) As if ſhe had ſaid—"Doſt thou not ſee, Job, what is become of all thy religion. *Thou feareſt God, and eſchewеſt evil*; and what art thou the better? See how God turns his hand againſt thee; he hath ſmitten thee in thy body, eſtate, relations, and *doſt thou ſtill retain thy integrity?* What, ſtill devout! Still weep and pray before him! Thou fool! caſt off religion, and *turn atheiſt!*" Here was a ſore temptation that the devil did hand over to Job by his diſcontented wife: only his grace, as a golden ſhield, did ward off the blow from his heart—*Thou ſpeakeſt as one of the fooliſh women.* "What profit is it," ſaith the diſcontented perſon, "*to ſerve the Almighty?* Thoſe that never trouble themſelves about religion, are the moſt proſperous; and I, in the mean-while, ſuffer want. I might as well give over driving the trade of religion, if this be all

all my reward." This is a ſore temptation, and oft it prevails. Atheiſm is the fruit that grows out of the bloſſom of diſcontent.

Oh, then, behold the excellency of Contentment! It doth repel this temptation. "If God be mine," ſaith the contented ſpirit, "it is enough: though I have no lands or tenements, his ſmile makes heaven. *His loves are better than wine. Better is the gleanings of Ephraim, than the vintage of Abiezer*, Judges, viii. 2. I have little *in hand*, but much *in hope*; my *livelihood* is ſhort, but this is his promiſe, *even eternal life*, 1 John, ii. 25. I am purſued by *malice*; but better is perſecuted godlineſs than proſperous wickedneſs." Thus divine contentment is a ſpiritual antidote both againſt *ſin* and *temptation*.

6. Contentment ſweetens every condition. Chriſt turned the water into wine; ſo contentment turns the water of Marah into ſpiritual wine. "Have I but little? yet it is more than I can deſerve or challenge. This little I have is in mercy: it is the fruit of Chriſt's blood; it is the legacy of free grace. A ſmall preſent, ſent from a King, is highly valued. This little I have, is with a good conſcience: it is not *ſtolen water*; guilt hath not muddied or poiſoned it; it runs pure. This *little* is a pledge of more; this bit of bread is an earneſt of that bread which I ſhall eat *in the*

kingdom of God. This little water in the cruiſe is an earneſt of that heavenly *nectar* which ſhall be diſtilled from the *true Vine.* Do I meet with ſome croſſes? My comfort is, if they be heavy, I have not far to go; I ſhall but carry my croſs to Golgotha, and there I ſhall leave it: my croſs is light in regard of the weight of glory. Hath God taken away my comforts from me? It is well the Comforter ſtill abides." Thus *contentment,* as an honeycomb, drops ſweetneſs into every condition. Diſcontent is a leaven that ſours every comfort; it puts aloes and wormwood upon the breaſt of the creature, it leſſens every mercy, it trebles every croſs: but the contented ſpirit ſucks ſweetneſs from every flower of Providence; it can make a treacle of poiſon. *Contentment* is full of *conſolation.*

7. Contentment hath this excellency—It is the beſt *commentator* upon Providence; it makes a fair interpretation of all God's dealings. Let the providences of God be ever ſo dark or myſterious, contentment doth conſtrue them ever in the beſt ſenſe. I may ſay of it as the Apoſtle of charity—*It thinks no evil,* 1 Cor. xiii. "Sickneſs," ſaith Contentment, "is God's furnace to refine his gold, and make it ſparkle the more: the priſon is an oratory, or houſe of prayer. What if God melts away the creature from me? He ſaw, perhaps, my heart grew too

too much in love with it. Had I been long in that fat paſture, I ſhould have ſurfeited; and the better my eſtate had been, the worſe my ſoul would have been. God is wiſe; he hath done this either to prevent ſome ſin, or to exerciſe ſome grace." What a bleſſed frame of heart is this! A contented Chriſtian is an advocate for God againſt unbelief and impatience: whereas Diſcontent takes every thing from God in the worſt ſenſe; it doth implead and cenſure God. "This evil I feel is but a ſymptom of greater evil: God is about to undo me. *The Lord hath brought us hither into the wilderneſs to ſlay us*," Numb. xx. 4. The contented ſoul takes all well; and, when his condition is ever ſo bad, he can ſay—*Yet God is good*, Pſal. lxxiii. 1.

SECT. II.

The ſecond Argument to Contentment.

THE ſecond argument or motive to contentment, is—A Chriſtian hath that which may make him content.

1. Hath not God given thee Chriſt? In him there are *unſearchable riches*, Eph. iii. 1. He is ſuch a golden *Mine* of wiſdom and grace, that all the ſaints and angels can never dig to the bottom. As Seneca ſaid to his friend Polybius—*Never*

complain of thy hard fortune as long as Cæſar is thy friend. So I ſay to a believer, Never complain as long as Chriſt is your friend. He is an enriching pearl, a ſparkling diamond: the infinite luſtre of his merits makes us ſhine in God's eyes; (*Eph.* i. 7.) in him there is both *fulneſs* and *ſweetneſs*; he is *goodneſs inexpreſſible*. Screw up your thoughts to the higheſt, ſtretch them to the utmoſt period, let them expatiate to their full latitude and extent; yet they fall infinitely ſhort of thoſe ineffable and inexhauſtible treaſures which are locked up in Jeſus Chriſt. And is not here enough to give the ſoul content? A Chriſtian that wants *neceſſaries*, yet, having Chriſt, he hath *the one thing needful*.

2. The ſoul is exerciſed and enamelled with the graces of the Spirit; and is not here enough to give contentment? Grace is of a divine birth; it is the new plantation; it is the flower of the heavenly paradiſe; it is the embroidery of the Spirit; it is *the ſeed of God*; (1 John, iii. 9.) it is *the ſacred unction*; (1 John, ii. 27.) it is Chriſt's portraiture in the ſoul; it is the very foundation on which the ſuperſtructure of glory is laid. O! of what infinite value is Grace! what a jewel is Faith! Well may it be called *precious* Faith! 2 *Pet.* i. 1. What is love, but a divine ſparkle in the ſoul? A ſoul, beautified with grace, is like a room richly hung with arras or tapeſtry,

peſtry, or the firmament beſpangled with glittering ſtars. Theſe are the *true riches*, (Luke, xvi. 11.) which cannot ſtand with reprobation—And is not here enough to give the ſoul *contentment?* What are all other things but like the wings of a butterfly, curiouſly painted? But they defile our fingers. "Earthly riches," ſaith Auguſtine, "are full of poverty." So indeed they are. For, 1. They cannot enrich the ſoul: oftentimes, under ſilken apparel, there is a thread-bare ſoul. 2. Theſe are corruptible: *riches are not for ever*, (Prov. xxvii. 24.) as the wiſe man ſaith. Heaven is a place where gold and ſilver will not go. A believer is rich *towards God*, (Luke, xii. 21.) why, then, art thou diſcontented? Hath not God given thee that which is better than the world? What if he doth not give thee the box, if he gives thee the jewel? What if he denies thee farthings, if he pays thee in a better coin? He gives thee gold, *viz.* ſpiritual mercies. What if the *water in the bottle* be ſpent? thou haſt enough in the fountain. What needs he complain of the world's *emptineſs*, that hath God's *fulneſs?* "The Lord is *my portion*," (Pſal. xvi. 5.) ſaith David, "then let the lines fall where they will, in a *ſick-bed*, or *priſon*, I will ſay, *The lines are fallen unto me in pleaſant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.*" 3. Art thou not heir to all the promiſes? Haſt thou not a reverſion

ſion of heaven? When thou letteſt go thy hold of natural life, art thou not ſure of eternal life? Hath not God given thee the Earneſt and Firſt-fruits of glory? Is not here enough to work the heart to contentment?

What, though ſome have a fraught
Of cloves, and nutmegs, and in cinnamon ſail?
If thou haſt wherewithal to ſpice a draught,
When griefs prevail;

And, for the future time, art heir
To the Iſle of Spices. Is it not fair?

HERBERT'S POEMS.

SECT. III.

The third Argument to Contentment.

THE third argument is—"Be content;" for elſe we confute our own prayers. We pray, *Thy will be done.* It is the will of God that we ſhould be in ſuch a condition; he hath decreed it, and he ſees it beſt for us: why, then, do we murmur, and are diſcontented at that which we pray for? Either we are not in good earneſt in our prayer, which argues *hypocriſy*; or elſe we contradict ourſelves, which argues *folly*.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

The fourth Argument to Contentment.

THE fourth argument to contentment is—" Becauſe now God hath his end, and Satan miſſeth of his end."

1. *God hath his end.* God's end, in all his croſs providences, is to bring the heart to ſubmit and be content; and, indeed, this pleaſeth God much: he loves to ſee his children ſatisfied with what portion he doth carve and allot them. It contents him to ſee us contented; therefore, let us acquieſce in God's providence: now God hath his end.

2. *Satan miſſeth of his end.* The end why the Devil (though by God's permiſſion) did ſmite Job, in his body and eſtate, was to perplex his mind; he did vex his *body*, on purpoſe that he might diſquiet his *ſpirit*. He hoped to bring Job into a fit of diſcontent; and then, that he would, in a paſſion, break forth againſt God; but Job, being ſo well contented with his condition as that he falls to *bleſſing of God*, did now diſappoint Satan of his hope. *The Devil ſhall caſt ſome of you into priſon*, Rev. ii. 10. Why doth the Devil throw us into priſon? It is not ſo much the hurting our body, as the moleſting our mind, that

that he aims at; he would impriſon our *contentment*, and diſturb the regular motion of our ſouls. This is the deſign: it is not ſo much the putting us into a *priſon*, as the putting us into a *paſſion*, that he attempts; but, by holy contentment, Satan loſeth his prey, he miſſeth of his end. The Devil hath oft deceived us; the beſt way to deceive him is, by being *content* in the midſt of *temptation:* our contentment will diſcontent Satan. Oh! let us not gratify our enemy! Diſcontent is the Devil's *delight:* now it is as he would have it; he loves to warm himſelf at the fire of our paſſions. *Repentance* is the joy *of the angels*, and *diſcontent* is the joy *of the devils*. As the Devil danceth at diſcord, ſo he ſings at diſcontent. The fire of our paſſions makes the Devil a bonfire: it is a kind of heaven to ſee us torturing ourſelves with our own troubles; but, by holy contentment, we fruſtrate him of his purpoſe, and do, as it were, put him out of countenance.

SECT. V.

The fifth Argument to Contentment.

THE next argument is—"By contentment, a Chriſtian gets a victory over himſelf." For a man to be able to rule his own ſpirit, this, of all others, is the moſt

moſt noble conqueſt, *Prov.* xvi. 32. Paſſion denotes weakneſs: to be diſcontented, is ſuitable to *fleſh* and *blood*. But to be in every ſtate content; reproached, yet *content*; impriſoned, yet *content*: this is above nature; this is ſome of that holy valour and chivalry which only a divine ſpirit is able to infuſe. In the midſt of the affronts of the world, to be patient; and, in the changes of the world, to have the ſpirit calmed; this is a conqueſt worthy indeed of the garland of honour. Holy Job, diveſted and turned out of all, leaving his *ſcarlet*, and embracing the *dunghill*—a ſad cataſtrophe—yet he had learned contentment. It is ſaid, *He fell upon the ground, and worſhipped*, Job, i. 20. One would have thought he would have fallen upon the ground, and *blaſphemed*; no, he fell, and *worſhipped*. He adored God's juſtice and holineſs—behold the ſtrength of grace! Here was an humble ſubmiſſion, yet a noble conqueſt: he got the victory over himſelf. It is no great matter for a man to yield to his own paſſions; this is facile and feminine: but to content himſelf in denying of himſelf, this is ſacred.

SECT.

SECT. VI.

The ſixth Argument to Contentment.

THE ſixth great argument to work the heart to contentment, is the conſideration that all God's providences, how croſs or trying ſoever, ſhall do a believer good: *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God*, Rom. viii. 28. Not only *all good things*, but *all evil things*, work for good; and ſhall we be diſcontented at that which works for our good?

What if ſickneſs, poverty, reproach, law-ſuits, &c. do unite and muſter their forces againſt us? All ſhall work for good; our *maladies* ſhall be our *medicines:* and ſhall we repine at that which ſhall undoubtedly do us good? *Unto the upright there ariſeth light in darkneſs*, Pſal. cxii. 4. Affliction may be baptized *Marah*; it is bitter, but *phyſical*. Becauſe this is ſo full of comfort, and may be a moſt excellent *catholicon* againſt diſcontent, I ſhall a little expatiate.

QUEST. It will be enquired how the evils of affliction work for good?

ANSW. Several ways.

1. They are *diſciplinary:* they teach us. The Pſalmiſt, having very elegantly deſcribed

ſcribed the Church's trouble, (*Pſal.* 74.) prefixeth this title to the Pſalm—"MASCHIL," which ſignifies a *Pſalm-giving inſtruction:* that which *ſeals up inſtruction,* works for good. God puts us ſometimes under the *black rod,* but it is a rod of diſcipline—*Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it,* Micah, ix. 9. God makes our *adverſity* our *univerſity:* affliction is a *preacher—Blow the trumpet in Tekoah,* Jer. 6. 1. The Trumpet was to preach to the people, as appears, *verſe* 6. *Be thou inſtructed, O Jeruſalem!* Sometimes God ſpeaks to the miniſter, to lift up his voice like a *trumpet;* (Iſai. lviii. 1.) and here he ſpeaks to the trumpet, to lift up it's voice like a *miniſter.* Afflictions teach us—

1. *Humility.* Commonly proſperous and proud—*corrections* are God's *corroſives,* to eat out the proud fleſh. Jeſus Chriſt *is a Lily of the valleys;* (Cant. ii. 1.) he dwells in an humble heart. God brings us into the valley of tears, that he may bring us into the valley of humility—*Remembering my affliction, the wormwood and the gall; my ſoul hath them ſtill in remembrance, and is humbled in me,* Lam. iii. 19, 20. When men are grown high, God hath no better way with them than to brew them a *cup of wormwood.* Afflictions are compared to *thorns,* Hoſ. ii. 8. God's thorns are to prick the bladder of pride. Suppoſe a man runs at another with a ſword to kill him, accidentally

cidentally it only lets out his impoſthume—this doth him good. God's ſword is to let out the impoſthume of pride: and ſhall that which makes us *humble*, make us diſcontented?

2. Afflictions teach us repentance—*Thou haſt chaſtiſed me, and I was chaſtiſed: I repented; and, after I was inſtructed, I ſmote upon my thigh, &c.* Jer. xxxi. 18, 19. Repentance is the precious fruit that grows upon the *Croſs*. When the fire is put under the ſtill, the water drops from the roſes. Fiery afflictions make the waters of repentance drop and diſtil from the eyes; and is here any cauſe of diſcontent?

3. Afflictions teach us to pray better—*They poured out a prayer when thy chaſtening was upon them*, Iſai. xxvi. 16. Before, they would ſay a prayer; now, they *poured* out a prayer. Jonah was aſleep in the ſhip, but awake and at prayer in the *whale's belly*. When God puts under the firebrands of affliction, our hearts then boil over the more. God loves to have his children *poſſeſſed* with a *ſpirit of prayer*. Never did David, *the ſweet ſinger of Iſrael*, tune his harp more melodiouſly, never did he pray better, than when he was *upon the waters*. Thus afflictions do *indiſcipline*; and ſhall we be diſcontented at that which is for our good?

2. Afflictions are *probatory*, Pſal. lxvi. 10, 11. Gold is not the worſe for being tried,

tried, or corn for being fanned. Affliction is the touchſtone of ſincerity; it tries what metal we are made of. Affliction is God's *fan* and his *ſieve*. It is good that men be known. Some ſerve God for a *livery*: they are like the fiſherman, that makes uſe of the net only to catch the fiſh; ſo they go a fiſhing with the net of religion only to catch preferment. Affliction diſcovers theſe. The Donatiſts went to the Goths, when the Arians prevailed. Hypocrites will not fail in a ſtorm: true grace holds out in the *winter-ſeaſon*. That is a *precious faith*, which, like the ſtar, ſhines brighteſt in the darkeſt night. It is good that our graces ſhould be brought to a trial: thus we have the comfort, and the Goſpel the honour; and why then diſcontented?

3. Afflictions—they are *expurgatory*. Theſe evils work for good, becauſe they work not ſin; and ſhall I be diſcontented at this? What if I have more *trouble*, if I have *leſs* ſin? The brighteſt day hath it's clouds, the pureſt gold it's droſs, and the moſt refined ſoul hath ſome lees of corruption. The ſaints loſe nothing in the furnace but what they can well ſpare, *their droſs:* is not this for our good? Why, then, ſhould we murmur? *I am come to ſend fire on the earth*, Luke, xii. 49. Tertullian underſtands it of the fire of *affliction*. God makes this like the fire of the three children, which burned only their bonds, and

ſet

ſet them at liberty in the furnace: ſo the fire of affliction ſerves to burn the bonds of iniquity—*By this, therefore, ſhall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit, to take away his ſin,* Iſai. xxvii. 9. When affliction, or death, comes to a wicked man, it takes away his *ſoul*; when it comes to a godly man, it only takes away his *ſin*: is there then any cauſe why we ſhould be diſcontented? God ſteeps us in the briniſh water of affliction, that he may take out our ſpots. God's people are his huſbandry, 1 *Cor.* iii. 6. The ploughing of the ground kills the weeds, and the harrowing of the earth breaks the hard clods: God's ploughing of us by affliction, is to kill the weeds of ſin; his harrowing of us is to break the hard clods of impenitency, that the heart may be the fitter to receive the ſeed of grace. And if this be all, why ſhould we be diſcontented?

4. Afflictions do both exerciſe and increaſe grace.

Firſt, They *exerciſe* grace. Affliction doth breathe our graces: every thing is moſt in it's excellency, when it is moſt in it's exerciſe. Our grace, though it cannot be dead, yet it may be *aſleep*, and hath need of awakening. What a dull thing is the fire, when it is hid in the embers; or the ſun, when it is maſked with a cloud? A ſick man is *living*, but not *lively*. Afflictions quicken and excite grace. God doth not

not love to ſee grace in the eclipſe. Now faith puts forth it's pureſt and moſt noble acts in times of affliction. God makes *the fall of the leaf the ſpring* of our graces. What if we are more *paſſive*, if grace be more active?

2. Afflictions do *increaſe* grace. As the wind ſerves to increaſe and blow up the flame, ſo do the windy blaſts of affliction augment and blow up our graces. Grace ſpends in the furnace; but it is like the *widow's oil in the cruiſe*, which did increaſe by pouring out. The torch, when it is beaten, burns brighteſt; ſo doth grace, when it is exerciſed by ſufferings. Sharp froſts nouriſh the good corn, ſo do ſharp afflictions grace: ſome plants grow better in the ſhade than in the ſun, as the *bay* and the *cypreſs*. The ſhade of adverſity is better for ſome than the ſunſhine of proſperity. *Naturaliſts* obſerve, that the *cole-wort* thrives better when it is watered with ſalt-water than with freſh; ſo do ſome thrive better in the ſalt water of affliction. And ſhall we be diſcontented at that which makes us grow and fructify more?

5. Theſe afflictions do bring more of God's immediate preſence into the ſoul. When we are moſt aſſaulted, we ſhall be moſt aſſiſted—*I will be with him in trouble*, Pſal. 15. It cannot be ill with that man, with whom God is, by his powerful preſence, ſupporting, and by his gracious preſence,

ſence, ſweetening, the preſent trial. God will be with us in trouble, not only to *behold* us, but to *uphold* us; as he was with Daniel in the *lion's den*, and the three children *in the furnace*. What if we have more trouble than others, if we have more of God with us than others have? We never have ſweeter ſmiles from God's face than when the world begins to look ſtrange—*Thy ſtatutes have been my ſongs*; Where? Not when I was upon the throne, but *in the houſe of my pilgrimage*, Pſal. cxix. 54. We read—*The Lord was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire*; 1 Kings, xii. 11. But, in a metaphorical and ſpiritual ſenſe, when the wind of affliction blows upon a believer, God is in the wind; when the fire of affliction kindles upon him, God is in the fire, *viz.* to ſanctify, to ſupport, to ſweeten. If God be with us, the furnace ſhall be turned into a feſtival, the priſon into a paradiſe, the earthquake into a joyful dance. Oh! what ſhould I be diſcontented, when I have more of God's company?

6. Theſe evils of affliction are for good, as they bring with them certificates of God's love, and are evidences of his ſpecial favour. Affliction is the ſaint's livery; it is a badge and cognizance of honour. That the God of glory ſhould look upon a worm, and take ſo much notice of him as to afflict him rather than loſe him, is an high

high act of favour. God's rod is a *ſceptre of dignity*. Job calls God's afflicting of us, *his magnifying* of us, *Job*, vii. 17. Some men's proſperity hath been their ſhame, when others affliction hath been their crown.

7. Theſe afflictions work for our good, becauſe they work for us *a far more exceeding weight of glory*, 2 Cor. iv. 16. That which works for my glory in heaven, works for my good. We do not read in Scripture that any man's honour and riches do work for him a *weight of glory*, but afflictions do; and ſhall a man be diſcontented at that which works for his glory? The heavier the weight of affliction, the heavier the weight of glory; not that our ſufferings do merit glory—as the Papiſts do wickedly gloſs—but though they are not the cauſe of our crown, yet they are the way to it; and God makes us, as he did our Captain, *perfect through ſufferings*, Heb. ii. 10. And ſhall not all this make us contented with our condition? Oh! I beſeech you, look not upon the *evil* of affliction, but the *good*. Afflictions, in Scripture, are called *viſitations*, Job, vii. 18. This word, which in the Hebrew implies to *viſit*, is taken in a *good* ſenſe as well as a *bad*. God's afflictions are but *friendly viſits*. Behold here, God's rod is like Aaron's *rod*, bloſſoming, and Jonathan's *rod*; it hath honey at the end of it. Poverty ſhall

ſtarve

ſtarve our ſins: the ſickneſs of the body ſhall cure a ſin-ſick ſoul. O then! inſtead of murmuring, and being diſcontented, *bleſs the Lord.* Hadſt thou not met with ſuch a rub in the way, thou mighteſt have gone to hell, and never ſtopped.

SECT. VII.

The ſeventh Argument to Contentment.

THE next argument to contentment is—"Conſider the evil of diſcontent." Male-content hath a mixture of grief and anger in it, and both theſe muſt needs raiſe a ſtorm in the ſoul. Have you not ſeen the poſture of a ſick man? Sometimes he will ſit upon his bed, by and bye he will lie down; and, when he is down, he is not quiet: firſt he turns to one ſide, and then to the other; he is ſtill reſtleſs. This is juſt the emblem of a diſcontented ſpirit: the man is not ſick, yet he is never well; ſometimes he likes ſuch a condition of life; and when he hath it, yet he is not pleaſed, he is ſoon weary; and then another condition of life. This is *an evil under the ſun.*

Now the evil of Diſcontent appears in three things—

1. The *ſordidneſs* of it; it is unworthy of a Chriſtian.

Firſt,

Firſt, It is unworthy of his profeſſion. It was the ſaying of an Heathen—"Bear thy condition quietly; know, thou art *a man.*" So I ſay—"Bear thy condition contentedly; know, thou art a *Chriſtian.*" Thou profeſſeſt to live by faith: what, and not content? Faith is a grace that doth *ſubſtantiate* things *not ſeen*, Heb. xi. 1. Faith looks beyond the creature; it feeds upon promiſes: Faith lives not by *bread alone.* When the water is ſpent in the *bottle*, Faith knows whither to have recourſe. Now, to ſee a Chriſtian dejected in the want of viſible ſupplies and recruits, where is Faith? "Oh!" ſaith one, "my eſtate in the world is down." Ah! and what is worſe, thy faith is down. Wilt thou not be contented, unleſs God let down the veſſel to thee as he did to Peter, wherein were all manner of *beaſts of the earth, and fowls of the air?* Acts, x. 12. Muſt you have firſt and ſecond courſe? This is like Thomas—*Unleſs I put my finger into the print of the nails, I will not believe*; (John, xx. 25.) ſo, unleſs thou haſt a ſenſible feeling of outward comforts, thou wilt not be content. True faith will *truſt* God where it cannot *trace* him, and will adventure upon God's *bond*, though it hath nothing in view. You, who are diſcontented becauſe you have not all you would, let me tell you, either your faith is at a low ebb, or at beſt but an *embryo*; it is a *weak faith* that muſt have ſtilts

and crutches to ſupport it: nay, diſcontent is not only below faith, but below reaſon. Why are you diſcontented? Is it becauſe you are diſpoſſeſſed of ſuch comforts? Well, and have you not Reaſon to guide you? Doth not Reaſon tell you, that you are but *tenants at will?* And may not God turn you out when he pleaſe? You hold not your eſtate *jure*, but *gratis*; not by a juridical right, but upon favour and courteſy.

2. It is unworthy of the *relation* we ſtand in to God. A Chriſtian is inveſted with the title and privilege of *Sonſhip*; (Eph. i. 5.) he is an heir of the Promiſe. Oh! conſider the lot of free-grace is fallen upon thee; thou art nearly allied to Chriſt, and of the blood royal; thou art advanced, in ſome ſenſe, above the angels—*Why then art thou, being the King's ſon, lean from day to day?* 2 Sam. xiii. 4. Why art thou diſcontented? O how unworthy is this! as if the heir to ſome great monarch ſhould go pining up and down, becauſe he may not pick ſuch a flower.

2. Conſider the *ſinfulneſs* of it, which appears in three things—

The cauſes
The concomitants } of it.
The conſequences

3. It

1. It is ſinful in the *cauſes*; which are theſe—

1. *Pride.* He that thinks highly of his deſert, uſually eſteems meanly of his condition. A diſcontented man is a proud man; he thinks himſelf *better* than others; therefore finds fault with the wiſdom of God that he is not *above* others. Thus the thing *formed* ſaith to him that *formed* it—*Why haſt thou made me thus?* Rom. ix. 20. Why am I not higher? Diſcontents are nothing elſe but the æſtuations and boilings over of pride.

2. The ſecond cauſe of diſcontent is *Envy*, which Auguſtine calls the Sin of the Devil. Satan envied Adam the glory of Paradiſe, and the robe of innocency: he that envies what his neighbour hath, is never contented with that portion which God's providence doth parcel out to him: as envy ſtirs up *ſtrife*—this made the Plebeian faction ſo ſtrong amongſt the Romans—ſo it creates *diſcontent*. The envious man looks ſo much upon the bleſſings which another enjoys, that he cannot ſee his own mercies, and ſo doth continually vex and torture himſelf. Cain envied that his brother's ſacrifice was accepted, and his rejected; hereupon he was diſcontented, and preſently murderous thoughts began to ariſe in his heart.

3. The third cauſe is *Covetouſneſs*. This is a radical ſin. Whence are vexing law-

ſuits, but from diſcontent? And whence is diſcontent, but from covetouſneſs? *Covetouſneſs* and *contentedneſs* cannot dwell in the ſame heart. *Avarice* is an *heluo*, that is never ſatisfied. The covetous man is like Behemoth—*Behold, he drinketh up a river: he truſteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth*, Job, xl. 23. There are four things (ſaith Solomon) ſay—*It is not enough.* I may add a fifth—*The heart of a covetous man—he* is ſtill craving. Covetouſneſs is like a wolf in the breaſt, which is ever feeding; and, becauſe a man is not ſatisfied, he is never content.

4. The fourth cauſe of diſcontent is *Jealouſy*; which is ſometimes occaſioned through melancholy, and ſometimes miſapprehenſion. The ſpirit of jealouſy cauſeth *this evil ſpirit.* Jealouſy *is the rage of a man*; (Prov. vi. 34.) and oft. this is nothing but *ſuſpicion* and *fancy*, yet ſuch as creates real diſcontent.

5. The fifth cauſe of d ſcontent is *Diſtruſt*, which is a great degree of Atheiſm. The diſcontented perſon is ever diſtruſtful. "*The hell of proviſion* grows low: I am in theſe ſtraits and exigencies—can God help me? *Can he prepare a table in the wilderneſs?* Sure he cannot. My eſtate is exhauſted, can God recruit me? My friends are gone, can God raiſe me up more? Sure the arm of his power is ſhrunk. I am like the *dry fleece*—can any water come upon

upon this fleece? *If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?*" 1 Kings, vii. 2. Thus the *anchor of hope* and *the ſhield of faith* being caſt away, the ſoul goes pining up and down.

Diſcontent is nothing elſe but the *echo* of unbelief; and remember, *diſtruſt* is worſe than *diſtreſs*.

2. Diſcontent is evil in the concomitants of it; which are two—

1. Diſcontent is joined with a *ſullen melancholy*. A Chriſtian, of a right temper, ſhould be ever chearful in God—*Serve the Lord with gladneſs*, Pſal. c. 5. A ſign the oil of grace hath been poured into the heart, when *the oil of gladneſs* ſhines in the countenance. Chearfulneſs credits religion: how can the diſcontented perſon be chearful? Diſcontent is a dogged ſullen humour; becauſe we have not what we deſire, God ſhall not have a good word or or look from us. As the bird in the cage, becauſe ſhe is pent up, and cannot fly in the open air, therefore beats herſelf againſt the cage, and is ready to kill herſelf. Thus that peeviſh prophet—*I do well to be angry to the death*, Jonah, iv.

2. Diſcontent is accompanied with *Unthankfulneſs*. Becauſe we have not all we deſire, we never mind the mercies which we have: we deal with God as the woman of Sarepta did with the prophet. The prophet Elijah had been a means to keep

her alive in the famine; for it was for his ſake that her *meal in the barrel*, and her *oil in the cruiſe*, failed not: but as ſoon as ever her ſon dies, ſhe falls into a paſſion, and begins to quarrel with the Prophet—*What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come to call my ſin to remembrance, and to ſlay my ſon?* 1 Kings, xvii. 18. So ungratefully we deal with God: we can be content to receive mercies from God; but, if he doth croſs us in the leaſt thing, then through diſcontent we grow touchy and impatient, and are ready to fly upon God. Thus God loſeth all his mercies. We read in Scripture of the *thank-offering*, 2 Chron. xx. 30. The diſcontented perſon cuts God ſhort of this; the Lord loſeth his *thank-offering*. A diſcontented Chriſtian repines in the midſt of mercies, as Adam, who ſinned in the midſt of Paradiſe. Diſcontent is a ſpider that ſucks the poiſon of unthankfulneſs out of the ſweeteſt flower of God's bleſſings; and, by a deviliſh chymiſtry, extracts droſs out of the moſt refined gold. The diſcontented perſon thinks every thing he doth for God too much, and every thing God doth for him too little. Oh, what a ſin is unthankfulneſs! It is an accumulative ſin. There are many ſins bound up in this one ſin: it is a voluminous wickedneſs; and how full of this ſin is *diſcontent?* A diſcontented Chriſtian, becauſe he hath not all the world,

world, therefore diſhonours God with the mercies which he hath. God made Eve out of Adam's rib, to be an *helper*, as the Father ſpeaks; but the Devil made an arrow of this rib, and ſhot Adam to the heart: ſo doth diſcontent take the rod of God's mercy, and ungratefully ſhoot at him: eſtate and liberty ſhall be employed againſt God. Thus it is oftentimes. Behold, then, how Diſcontent and Ingratitude are interwoven and twiſted one within another. Thus diſcontent is ſinful in it's concomitants.

3. It is ſinful in it's *conſequences*; which are theſe—

1. It makes a man very unlike the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is a *meek ſpirit*. The Holy Ghoſt deſcended in the likeneſs of a *dove*, Matt. iii. 6. A dove is the emblem of meekneſs. A diſcontented ſpirit is not a meek ſpirit.

2. It makes a man like the Devil. The Devil, being ſwelled with the poiſon of envy and malice, is never content: juſt ſo is the malecontent. The Devil is an unquiet ſpirit; he is ſtill *walking about*: (1 Pet. v. 8.) it is his reſt to be walking; and herein is the diſcontented perſon like him; for he goes up and down vexing himſelf. *Seeking reſt, and finding none*, he is the Devil's picture.

3. Diſcontent diſjoints the ſoul, it untunes the heart for duty—*Is any man afflicted,*

flicted, let him pray, Jam. v. 13. But is any man *diſcontented*; how ſhall he pray? Diſcontent is full of wrath and paſſion: the malecontent cannot lift up pure hands; he lifts up *leprous hands*; he poiſons his prayers. Will God accept of a poiſoned ſacrifice? Chryſoſtom compares prayer to a fine garland. "Thoſe," ſaith he, "that make a garland, their hands had need be clean." Prayer is a precious garland, the heart that makes it had need be clean. Diſcontent throws poiſon in the ſpring, which was death among the Romans. Diſcontent puts the heart into a diſorder and mutiny, and ſuch a one cannot ſerve the Lord *without diſtraction*.

4. Diſcontent ſometimes unfits for the very uſe of reaſon. Jonah, in a paſſion of diſcontent, ſpake no better than blaſphemy and nonſenſe—"*I do well*," ſaid he, "*to be angry to the death*," Jonah, iv. 8. What, to be angry with God, and to die for anger? Sure, he did not know well what he ſaid. When diſcontent tranſports, then, like Moſes, we ſpeak *unadviſedly with our lips*. This humour doth even ſuſpend the very acts of reaſon.

5. Diſcontent doth not only diſquiet a man's ſelf, but thoſe who are near him. This evil ſpirit troubles *families, pariſhes, &c.* If there be but one ſtring out of tune, it ſpoils all the muſick. One diſcontented ſpirit makes jarrings and diſ-

cords

cords among others: it is this ill-humour that breeds quarrels and law-ſuits. Whence is all our *contention*, but for want of *contentment?* From whence *come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your luſts?* (James, iv. 1.) in particular, from this *luſt* of diſcontent? Why did Abſalom raiſe a war againſt his father, and would have taken off, not only his *crown*, but his *head?* Was it not his diſcontent? Abſalom would be king. Why did Ahab ſtone Naboth? Was it not diſcontent about the vineyard? O this devil of diſcontent! Thus you have ſeen the ſinfulneſs of it.

3. Conſider the ſimplicity of it. I may ſay as the Pſalmiſt—*Surely they are diſquieted in vain*, (Pſal. ix. 6.) which appears thus—

1. Is it not a vain ſimple thing to be troubled at the loſs of that which is in it's own nature periſhing and changeable? God hath put a viciſſitude into the creature: all the world rings changes; and for me to meet with inconſtancy here, to loſe a friend, eſtate, to be in a conſtant fluctuation, is no more than to ſee a flower wither, or a leaf drop off in autumn. There is an *autumn* upon every comfort, *a fall of the leaf*. Now, it is extreme folly to be diſcontented at the loſs of thoſe things which are ſo, in their own nature, loſeable. What Solomon ſaith of *riches*, is true of all things under

the ſun—"*They take wings.*" Noah's dove brought an olive-branch in it's mouth; but preſently flew out of the ark, and never returned more. Such a comfort brings to us honey in it's mouth; but it hath wings: and to what purpoſe ſhould we be troubled, unleſs we had wings to fly after and overtake it?

2. Diſcontent is an heart-breaking—*By ſorrow of the heart the ſpirit is broken*; (Prov. xxv. 13.) it takes away the comfort of life. There is none of us but may have mercies if we can ſee them. Now, becauſe we have not all we deſire, therefore we will loſe the comfort of that which we have already. Jonah, having his gourd ſmitten—a withering vanity—was ſo diſcontented, that he never thought of his miraculous deliverance out of the whale's belly; he takes no comfort of his life, but wiſheth that he might die. What folly is this? We muſt have all or none; herein we are like children, that throw away the piece which is cut them, becauſe they may have no bigger. Diſcontent eats out the comfort of life. Beſides, it were well if it were ſeriouſly weighed how prejudicial this is even to our health: for diſcontent, as it doth diſcruciate the mind, ſo it doth pine the body; it frets as a moth, and, by waſting the ſpirits, weakens the vitals. The pleuriſy of diſcontent brings the body into a conſumption; and is not this folly?

3. Diſ-

3. Diſcontent does not eaſe us of our burden, but makes the croſs heavier. A contented ſpirit goes chearfully under it's affliction. Diſcontent makes our grief as unſupportable as it is unreaſonable. If the leg be well, it can endure a fetter, and not complain; but if the leg be ſore, then the fetter troubles. Diſcontent of mind is the *ſore* that makes the fetters of affliction more grievous. Diſcontent troubles us more than the trouble itſelf; it ſteeps the affliction in wormwood. When Chriſt was upon the croſs, the Jews brought him *gall* and *vinegar* to drink, that it might add to his ſorrow. Diſcontent brings to a man in affliction gall and vinegar to drink: this is worſe than the affliction itſelf. Is it not folly for a man to embitter his own croſs?

4. Diſcontent ſpins out our troubles the longer. A Chriſtian is diſcontented becauſe he is in want; and therefore he is in want, becauſe he is diſcontented: he murmurs becauſe he is afflicted, and therefore he is afflicted becauſe he murmurs. Diſcontent doth delay and adjourn our mercies. God deals herein with us as we uſe to do with our children: when they are quiet and chearful, they ſhall have any thing; but, if we ſee them cry and fret, then we with-hold from them. We get nothing from God, by our diſcontent, but blows. The more the child ſtruggles, the more it is beaten: when we ſtruggle with

God by our ſinful paſſions, he doubles and trebles his ſtrokes; God will tame our curſt hearts. What got Iſrael by their peeviſhneſs? They were within eleven days journey of Canaan, and now they were diſcontented, and began to murmur: God leads them a march of forty years long in the wilderneſs. Is it not folly for us to adjourn our own mercies? Thus you have ſeen the evil of diſcontent. I have been long upon this argument; but, to proceed—

SECT. VIII.

The eighth Argument to Contentment.

THE next argument or motive to Contentment is this—Why is not a man content with the competency which he hath? Perhaps, if he had more, he would be leſs content: covetouſneſs is a dry drunkenneſs. The world is ſuch, that the more we *have*, the more we *crave*; it cannot fill the heart of man. When the fire burns, how do you quench it? Not by putting oil to the flame, or laying on more wood, but by withdrawing the fuel. When the appetite is inflamed after riches, how may a man be ſatisfied? Not by having juſt what he deſires, but by withdrawing the *fuel*, *&c.* moderating and leſſening his deſires. He that is contented hath enough.

enough. A man, in a fever or dropſy, thirſts; how do you ſatisfy him? Not by giving him liquid things, which will enflame his thirſt the more; but by removing the cauſe, and ſo curing his diſtemper. The way for a man to be contented is not by raiſing his eſtate higher, but by bringing his heart lower.

SECT. IX.

The ninth Argument to Contentment.

THE next argument to Contentment is—*The ſhortneſs of life.* "It is but a *vapour*," ſaith James, (*Jam.* iv. 14.) life is a wheel ever running. The poets painted Time with wings, to ſhew the volubility and ſwiftneſs of it. Job compares it to a ſwift *poſt*, Job, ix. 25.—our life rides poſt—and a *day*, not a *year*. It is indeed like a *day:* infancy is, as it were, the *day-break*; *youth* is the ſun-riſing; *full growth* is the ſun in the meridian; *old age* is ſun-ſetting. *Sickneſs* is the *evening*, then comes the *night* of death. How quick is this day of life ſpent! Oftentimes this ſun goes down at noon-day: life ends before the evening of old-age comes; nay, ſometimes the ſun of life ſets preſently after ſun-riſing. Quickly after the dawning of infancy, the night of death approaches. Oh, how

how ſhort is the life of man! The conſideration of the brevity of life may work the heart to contentment. Remember thou art to be here but a day; thou haſt but a ſhort way to go, and what needs a long proviſion for a ſhort way? If a traveller have but enough to bring him to his journey's end, he deſires no more. We have but a day to live, and perhaps we may be in the twelfth hour of the day; why, if God give us but enough to bear our charges till night, it is ſufficient. Let us be content. If a man let the leaſe of an houſe or farm but for two or three days, and he ſhould fall a building and planting, would he not be judged very indiſcreet? So when we have but a ſhort time here, and death calls us preſently off the ſtage, to thirſt immoderately after the world, and pull down our ſouls to build up an eſtate, is it not extreme folly? Therefore, as Eſau ſaid once, in a *profane ſenſe*, concerning his birth-right—"*Lo! I am at the point to die, and what profit ſhall this birth-right do to me?*" So let a Chriſtian ſay, in a *religious ſenſe*—"Lo! I am even at the point of death; my grave is going to be made, and what good will the world do me? If I have but enough till *ſun-ſetting*, I am content."

SECT.

SECT. X.

The tenth Argument to Contentment.

THE tenth argument or motive to Contentment, is—" Conſider ſeriouſly the nature of a proſperous condition." There are, in a proſperous eſtate, three things—

1. More trouble. Many who have abundance of all things to enjoy, yet have not ſo much content and ſweetneſs in their lives, as ſome that go to their hard labour. Sad, ſolicitous thoughts, do often attend a proſperous condition: *care* is as an evil ſpirit which haunts a rich man, and will not ſuffer him to be quiet. When his cheſt is full of gold, his heart is full of care, either how to *manage*, or how to *encreaſe*, or how to *ſecure*, what he hath gotten. Oh, the troubles and perplexities that do wait upon proſperity! The world's high-ſeats are very uneaſy; ſun-ſhine is pleaſant, but ſometimes it ſcorcheth with it's heat; the bee gives honey, but ſometimes it ſtings: proſperity hath it's ſweetneſs, and alſo it's ſting. *Competency, with Contentment, is far more eligible.* Never did Jacob ſleep better than when he had the heavens for his canopy, and an hard ſtone for his pillow. A large voluminous eſtate

eſtate is but like a long trailing garment, which is more troubleſome than uſeful.

2. In a proſperous condition therein, more danger; and that two ways—

Firſt, In reſpect of a man's ſelf. The rich man's *table is oft his ſnare*; he is ready to ingulph himſelf too deep in theſe ſweet waters. In this ſenſe it is hard to know how to *abound*. It muſt be a ſtrong brain that bears heady wine; he had need have much wiſdom and grace that knows how to bear an high condition: either he is ready to kill himſelf with care, or ſurfeit himſelf with luſcious delights. Oh, the hazard of *honour*, the damage of dignity! Pride, Security, Rebellion, are the three worms of plenty, *Deut.* xxxii. 15. The paſtures of proſperity are rank and ſurfeiting. How ſoon are we broken upon the ſoft pillow of eaſe? Proſperity is often a *trumpet* that ſounds a *retreat*; it calls men off from the purſuit of religion. The ſun of proſperity oft dulls, and puts out the fire of zeal. How many ſouls hath the *pleuriſy of abundance* killed? They that *will be rich*, fall into ſnares, 1 *Tim.* vi. 10. The world is bird-lime at our feet; it is full of *golden ſands*, but they are *quick-ſands*. Proſperity, like ſmooth Jacob, will ſupplant and betray: a great eſtate, without much vigilancy, will be a thief to rob us of

of heaven; ſuch as are upon the pinnacle of honour, are in moſt danger of falling.

A lower eſtate is leſs hazardous. The little pinnace rides ſafe by the ſhore; when the gallant ſhip, advancing with it's maſt and top-ſail, is caſt away. Adam, in Paradiſe, was overcome, when Job on the dung-hill was a conqueror. Sampſon fell aſleep on Delilah's lap: ſome have fallen ſo faſt aſleep on the lap of eaſe and plenty, that they have never waked till they have been in hell. The world's *fawning* is worſe than it's *frowning*; and it is more to be feared when it ſmiles, than when it thunders. Proſperity, in Scripture, is compared to a candle—*When his candle ſhined upon my head, Job*, xxix. 3. How many have burnt their wings about this candle! The corn, being over-ripe, ſhakes; and fruit, when it mellows, begins to rot: when men do mellow with the ſun of proſperity, commonly their ſouls begin to rot in ſin. *How hard is it for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven!* Luke, xviii. 24. His golden weights keep him from aſcending up *the hill of God*; and ſhall we not be content, though we are placed in a lower orb? What if we are not in ſo much bravery and gallantry as others? We are not ſo much in danger: as we want the honour of the world, ſo the temptations. Oh, the abundance of danger that is in abundance! We ſee, by common experience, that *lunaticks*, when the

the moon is declining, and in the wane, are ſober enough; but, when it is in the full, they are more wild and exorbitant. When men's eſtates are in the wane, they are more ſerious about their ſouls, more humble; but when it is the *full of the moon*, and they have abundance, then their hearts begin to ſwell with their eſtates, and are ſcarce themſelves. Thoſe that write concerning the ſeveral *climates*, obſerve, that ſuch as live in the northern parts of the world, if you bring them into the ſouth part, they loſe their ſtomachs, and die quickly; but thoſe that live in the more ſouthern hot climates, bring them into the north, and their ſtomachs mend, and they are long lived. Give me leave to apply it: bring a man from the cold ſtarving climate of poverty into the hot ſouthern climate of proſperity, and he begins to loſe his appetite to good things, he grows weak, and a thouſand to one if all his religion doth not die; but bring a Chriſtian from the ſouth to the north, from a rich flouriſhing eſtate into a jejune low condition, let him come into a more cold and hungry air, and then his ſtomach mends, he hath better appetite after heavenly things, he hungers more after Chriſt, he thirſts more for grace, he eats more at one meal of the Bread of Life than at ſix before. This man is now like to live and hold out in his religion. Be content then with a morſel;

if

if you have but enough to ſerve you on your road to heaven, it ſufficeth.

2. A proſperous condition is dangerous in regard of others: a great eſtate for the moſt part draws envy to it; (*Gen.* xxvi. 12, 13, 14.) whereas in David, *a ſhepherd*, was quiet; but David, *a courtier*, was purſued by his enemies. Envy cannot endure a ſuperior. An envious man knows not how to live, but upon the ruins of his neighbour; he raiſeth himſelf higher by bringing others lower. Proſperity is an eye-ſore to many. Such ſheep as have moſt wool are ſooneſt fleeced. The barren tree grows peaceably; no man meddles with the aſh or willow; but the apple-tree and the damſon ſhall have many rude ſuitors. Oh, then, be content to carry a leſſer ſail! He that hath leſs *revenues*, hath leſs *envy*: ſuch as bear the faireſt frontiſpiece, and make the greateſt ſhew in the world, are the *white* for envy and malice to ſhoot at.

3. A proſperous condition hath in it a greater reckoning: every man muſt be reſponſible for his talents. Thou that haſt great poſſeſſions in the world, doſt thou trade thy eſtate for God's glory? Art thou *rich in good works?* Grace makes a *private perſon* a *common good*. Doſt thou diſburſe thy money for publick uſes? It is lawful—in this ſenſe—to put out our money to uſe. Oh, let us all remember, an eſtate is a *depoſitum!* We are but ſtewards, and our

our Lord and Maſter will ere long ſay—*Give an account of your ſtewardſhip.* The greater our eſtate, the greater *our charge*; the more our revenues, the more our reckonings. You that have a leſſer mill going in the world, be content; God will expect leſs from you, where he hath ſowed more ſparingly.

SECT. XI.

The eleventh Argument to Contentment.

THE eleventh argument is the example of thoſe who have been eminent for contentment. *Examples* are uſually more forcible than *precepts.* Abraham being called out to hot ſervice, and ſuch as was againſt fleſh and blood, was content. God bids him offer up his ſon Iſaac, *Gen.* xxii. 2. This was a great work. Iſaac was the ſon of his old age, the ſon of his love, and the ſon of the promiſe: Chriſt, the Meſſiah, was to come of his line—*In Iſaac ſhall thy ſeed be bleſſed*; ſo that, to offer up Iſaac, ſeemed not only to oppoſe Abraham's reaſon, but his *faith* too; for if Iſaac die, the world, for aught he knew, muſt be without a Mediator. Beſides, if Iſaac be ſacrificed, was there no other hand to do it but Abraham's? Muſt the father needs be the executioner? Muſt he, that was the

the inſtrument of giving Iſaac his being, be the inſtrument of taking it away? Yet Abraham doth not diſpute or heſitate, but believes againſt *hope*, and is content with God's preſcription. So, when God called him to *leave his country*, (Heb. xi. 1.) he was content. Some would have argued thus—"What, leave all my friends, my native ſoil, my brave ſituation, and go turn pilgrim?" Abraham is content: beſides, Abraham went blindfold—*He knew not whither he went*, verſe 8. God held him in ſuſpenſe: he muſt go wander, he knows not where; and when he doth come to the place God had laid out for him, he knows not what oppoſitions he ſhall meet with there—the world doth ſeldom caſt a favourable aſpect upon ſtrangers, *Gen.* xxxii. 16.—yet he is content, and obeys. *He ſojourned in the Land of Promiſe*, Heb. xi. 9. Behold a little his pilgrimage. Firſt, he goes to Charan, a city in Meſopotamia; when he had ſojourned there a while, his father dies; then he removes to Sichem, then to Bethelem, in Canaan; there a famine ariſeth; *then* he went down to Egypt; after that he returns into Canaan; when he came there—it is true he had a promiſe, but he found nothing to anſwer expectation—he had not there one foot of land, but was an exile. In this time of his ſojourning, he buried his wife; and, as for his dwellings, he had no ſumptuous buildings,

ings, but led his life in poor cottages. All this was enough to have broken any man's heart. Abraham might think thus with himſelf—"Is this the land I muſt poſſeſs? Here is no probability of any good: *all things are againſt me.*" Well, is he diſcontented? No. God ſaith to him—"Abraham, go, leave thy country." And this word was enough to lead him all the world over: he is preſently upon his march. Here was a man that had learned to be content. But let us deſcend a little lower, to heathen Zeno—of whom Seneca ſpeaks—who had once been very rich, hearing of a ſhipwreck, and that all his goods were drowned at ſea—"Fortune," ſaith he—he ſpake in an heathen dialect—"has dealt well with me, and would have me now to ſtudy philoſophy." He was content to change his courſe of life, to leave off being a merchant, and turn philoſopher. And if an Heathen ſaid thus, ſhall not a Chriſtian much more ſay, when the world is drained from him—"God would have me leave off following the world, and ſtudy Chriſt more, and how to get to heaven." Do I ſee an Heathen contented, and a Chriſtian diſquieted? How did Heathens villify thoſe things which Chriſtians magnify? Though they knew not God, or what true happineſs meant, yet would ſpeak very ſublimely of a *Numen* or Deity, and of the life to come, as Ariſtotle and Plato; and for thoſe Eliſian delights

delights which they did but fancy, they undervalued and contemned the things here below. It was the doctrine they taught their ſcholars, and which ſome of them practiſed, that *men ſhould ſtrive to be contented with a little*; they were willing to make an exchange; to have leſs good, and more learning: and ſhall not we be content then to have leſs of the world, ſo we may have more of Chriſt? May not Chriſtians bluſh to ſee Heathens content with a little, ſo much as would recruit nature, and to ſee themſelves ſo tranſported with the love of earthly things; that if they begin a little to abate, and the *bill of proviſion* grows ſhort, they murmur, and are like Micah—*Have ye taken away my gods, and do ye aſk me what I ail?* Judges, xviii. 24. Have Heathens gone ſo far in contentment? And is it not ſad for us to come ſhort of them that came ſhort of heaven? Theſe *heroes* of their time, how did they embrace death itſelf? Socrates died in priſon; Hercules was burnt alive; Cato—whom Seneca calls the lively image and portraiture of virtue—thruſt through with a ſword; but how bravely, and with what contentment of ſpirit, did they die? "Shall I," ſaith Seneca, "weep for Cato, or Regulus, or the reſt of thoſe worthies that died with ſo much valour and patience? Did not croſs providences make them to alter their countenances, and do I ſee a Chriſtian appalled

and

and amazed? Did not death affright them? and doth it diſtract us? Did the ſpring-head of Nature riſe ſo high? and ſhall not grace, like the *waters of the ſanctuary*, riſe higher? We that pretend to live by faith, may we not go to ſchool to them who had no other pilot but Reaſon to guide them? Nay, let me come a ſtep lower, to creatures void of reaſon: we ſee every creature is contented with it's allowance; the beaſts with their provender, the birds with their neſts, they live only upon providence; and ſhall we make ourſelves below them? Let a Chriſtian go to ſchool to the ox and the aſs to learn contentment; we think we never have enough, and are ſtill laying up: the fowls of the air do not lay up, *they reap not, nor gather into barns*, (Matt. vi. 26.) it is an argument which Chriſt brings, to make Chriſtians contented with their condition. The birds do not lay up, yet they are provided for, and are contented. "*Are ye not*," ſaith Chriſt, "*much better than they?*" But if you are diſcontented, are ye not much worſe than they? Let theſe examples quicken us.

SECT

SECT. XII.

The twelfth Argument to Contentment.

THE twelfth argument to contentment is—"Whatever change or trouble a child of God meets with, it is all the hell he ſhall have." Whatever eclipſe may be upon his name, or eſtate, I may ſay of it as Athanaſius of his baniſhment, it is a little cloud which will ſoon be blown over; and then his gulph is ſhot, his hell is paſt.

Death begins a wicked man's hell, but it puts an end to a godly man's hell. Think with thyſelf—"What if I endure this? It is but a *temporary hell.*" Indeed, if all our hell be here, it is but an eaſy hell. What is the cup of affliction to the cup of damnation? Lazarus could not get a crumb; he was ſo diſeaſed, that the dogs took pity on him, and—as if they had been his phyſicians—*licked his ſores:* but this was an eaſy hell, the *angels* quickly fetched him out of it. If all our hell be in this life, in the midſt of this hell we may have the love of God; and then it is no more *hell*, but *paradiſe.* If our hell be here, we may ſee to the *bottom* of it; it is but ſkin-deep, it cannot touch the ſoul, and we may ſee to the *end* of it: it is an hell that is ſhort-lived. After a wet night of affliction comes

a bright morning of the Reſurrection; if our lives be ſhort, our trials cannot be long. As our *riches* take *wings* and fly, ſo do our *ſufferings*; then let us be contented.

SECT. XIII.

The thirteenth Argument to Contentment.

THE laſt argument to Contentment is this—"To have a *competency*, and to want *contentment*, is a great judgment." For a man to have a huge ſtomach, that whatever meat you give him he is ſtill craving and never ſatisfied; you do ſay, this is a great judgment upon the man. Thou, who art a devourer of money, and yet never haſt enough, but ſtill crieſt, *Give, give*: this is a ſad judgment—*They ſhall eat, and not have enough*, Hoſea, iv. 10. *The throat* of a malicious man is an open *ſepulchre*, (Rom. iii. 23.) ſo is the heart of a covetous man. Covetouſneſs is not only a *ſin*, but the *puniſhment* of a ſin. It is a ſecret curſe upon a covetous perſon; he ſhall thirſt and thirſt, and never be ſatisfied—*He that loveth ſilver, ſhall not be ſatisfied with ſilver*, (Eccl. v. 10.) and is not this a curſe? What was it but a ſevere judgment upon the people of Judah? *Ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye*

are

are not filled with drink, Hag. i. 6. Oh! let us take heed of this *plague*. Did Eſau ſay to his brother—"I have *abundance*, my brother;" (*Gen.* xxxiii. 6.) or, as we tranſlate it, *I have enough?* and ſhall not a Chriſtian ſay ſo much more? It is ſad that our heart ſhould be ſo dead to heavenly things, and as a ſponge to ſuck in earthly. Let all that hath been ſaid work our minds to holy contentment.

CHAP. XII.

Three Things inſerted by Way of Caution.

IN the next place, I come to lay down ſome neceſſary cautions. Though, I ſay, a man ſhould be contented in every eſtate, yet there are three eſtates in which he muſt not be contented—

1. He muſt not be contented in a *natural eſtate*; here he muſt learn not to be content. A ſinner, in his natural ſtate, is under the *wrath of God*, (John, iii. 16.) and ſhall he be content, when that dreadful vial is going to be poured out? Is it nothing to be under the ſcorchings of Divine fury?—*Who can dwell with everlaſting burnings?* A ſinner, as a ſinner, is *under the power of Satan*, (Acts, xxvi. 18.) and ſhall he in this *eſtate* be contented? Who would be contented to ſtay in the enemy's

quarters? While we ſleep in the lap of ſin, the Devil doth to us as the Philiſtines did to Sampſon, cut the lock of our ſtrength, and put out our eyes, 2 *Cor.* iv. 4. Be not content, O ſinner! in this eſtate. For a man to be in debt body and ſoul, and in fear every hour to be arreſted and carried priſoner to hell, ſhall he now be content? Here I preach againſt contentment. May you be enabled to ſeek deliverance from ſuch a condition! I would haſten you out of it as the angel haſtened Lot out of Sodom, *Gen.* xix. 15. There is the ſmell of the fire and brimſtone upon you. The longer a man ſtays in his ſin, the more ſin doth ſtrengthen, *Heb.* iii. 13. It is hard to get out of ſin when the heart, as a garriſon, is victualled and fortified. A young plant is eaſily removed; but, when the tree is once rooted, there is no ſtirring for it. Thou, who art rooted in thy pride, unbelief, and impenitency, it will coſt thee many a ſad pull ere thou art plucked out of thy *natural eſtate*, Jer. vi. 16. It is an hard thing to have a brazen face and a broken heart. *He travailleth with iniquity*, Pſal. vii. 14. Be aſſured, the longer you travail with your ſins, the more and the ſharper pangs you muſt expect in the *new birth*. Oh, be not contented with your natural eſtate! David ſaith—*Why art thou diſquieted, O my ſoul?* Pſal. xliii. 5. But a ſinner ſhould ſay to himſelf—" Why art thou not diſquieted, O my

O my ſoul? Why is it that thou layeſt afflictions ſo to heart, and canſt not lay ſin to heart?" It is a mercy when we are diſquieted about ſin. A man had better be at the trouble of ſetting a bone, than to be lame and in pain all his life. Bleſſed is that trouble that brings the ſoul to Chriſt. It is one of the worſt ſights to ſee a bad conſcience quiet; of the two, better is a fever than a lethargy. I wonder to ſee a man in his natural eſtate content! What, contented to go to hell!

2. Though, in regard of externals, a man ſhould be in every ſtate content, yet he muſt not be content in ſuch a condition wherein God is apparently diſhonoured. If a man's trade be ſuch that he can hardly uſe it but he muſt treſpaſs upon a command—and ſo *makes a trade of ſin*—he muſt not content himſelf in ſuch a condition. God never called any man to ſuch a calling as is ſinful: a man in this caſe had better knock off and deſiſt; better loſe ſome of his gain, ſo he may leſſen ſome of his guilt. So for ſervants that live in *a profane family*—the ſuburbs of hell—where the name of God is not called upon, unleſs when it is taken in vain; they are not to content themſelves in ſuch a place, they are to come *out of the tents of theſe ſinners*; there is a double danger in living among the profane—

1. Leſt we come to be infected with the poiſon of their ill example. Joſeph, living

in Pharaoh's court, had learned to *ſwear by the life of Pharaoh*, Gen. xlii. 15. We are prone to ſuck in example: men take in deeper impreſſions by the *eye*, than by the *ear*. Dives was a bad pattern; and he had many brethren, who, ſeeing him ſin, trod juſt in his ſteps—" Therefore," ſaith he, " I pray thee ſend him *to my Father's houſe*; *for I have five brethren, that he may teſtify to them, that they come not into this place of torment*," Luke, xvi. 27, 28. Dives knew which way they went: it is eaſy to catch a diſeaſe from another, but not to catch health. The bad will ſooner *corrupt* the good, than the good will *convert* the bad. Take an equal quantity and proportion, ſo much ſweet wine, with ſo much ſour vinegar; the vinegar will ſooner ſour the wine, than the wine will ſweeten the vinegar. Sin is compared to the *plague*, (1 Kings, viii. 38.) and to *leaven*, (1 Cor. v. 7.) to ſhew of what a ſpreading nature it is. A bad maſter makes a bad ſervant. Jacob's cattle, by looking on the rods which were ſpeckled and ring-ſtraked, conceived like the rods: we do as we ſee others before us, eſpecially *above* us. If the head be ſick, the other parts of the body are diſtempered. If the ſun ſhine not upon the mountains, it muſt needs ſet in the valleys. We pray—*Lead us not into temptation*; and do we lead ourſelves into temptation? Lot was the world's

world's miracle, who kept himſelf freſh in Sodom's ſalt water.

2. By living in an evil family, we are liable to incur their puniſhment—*Pour out thy wrath upon the families that call not upon thy name*, Jer. xiii. 25. For want of pouring out prayer, the wrath of God was ready to be poured out. It is dangerous living in the *tents of* Kedar. When God ſends his *flying roll*, written within and without with curſes, it *enters into the houſe of the thief and perjurer, and it conſumes the timber and the ſtones thereof*, Zach. v. 4. Is it not of ſad conſequence to live in a profane perjured family, when the ſin of the governor pulls his houſe about his ears? If the ſtone and timber be deſtroyed, how ſhall the ſervant eſcape? And ſuppoſe God ſend not a *temporal roll* of curſes in the family, there is a *ſpiritual roll*, and that is worſe, *Prov.* iii. 33. Be not content to live where religion dies. *Salute the brethren, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his houſe*, 2 Col. iv. 15. The houſe of the godly is a *little church*; the houſe of the wicked *a little hell*, Prov. vii. 25. Oh, incorporate yourſelves into a religious family: the houſe of a good man is perfumed with a bleſſing, *Prov.* iii. 33. When the holy oil of grace is poured on the head, the *ſavour* of this ointment ſweetly diffuſeth itſelf, and the *virtue* of it runs down upon the ſkirts of the family. Pious examples are

very magnetical and forcible. Seneca ſaid to his ſiſter—" Though I leave you not wealth, yet I will leave you a good example." Let us ingraft ourſelves among the ſaints: by being often among the ſpices, we come to ſmell of them.

3. The third caution is—Though in every condition we muſt be content, yet we are not to content ourſelves with a *little grace*. Grace is the *beſt bleſſing*. Though we ſhould be contented with a competency of eſtate, yet not with a competency of grace. It was the end of Chriſt's aſcenſion to heaven, *to give gifts*; and the end of thoſe gifts, *that we may grow up into him who is the head Chriſt*, Eph. iv. 15. Where the apoſtle diſtinguiſheth between our *being* in Chriſt, and our *growing* in him, our ingrafting and our flouriſhing. Be not content with a morſel of religion.

It is not enough that there be *life*, but there muſt be *fruit*. Barrenneſs in the Law was accounted a curſe. The further we are from fruit, the nearer we are to curſing, *Heb.* vi. 8. It is a ſad thing when men are fruitful only *in the unfruitful works of darkneſs*. Be not content with a drachm or two of grace. Oh, covet more grace! never think thou haſt enough. We are bid to *covet the beſt things*, 1 Cor. xii. It is an heavenly ambition, when we deſire to be high in God's favour; a bleſſed contention, when all the ſtrife is, who ſhall be the

the moſt holy. Saint Paul, though he was content with a little of the world, yet not with a little grace; he *reached forward*, and *preſſed towards the mark of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus*, Phil. iii. 14. A true Chriſtian is a *wonder*; he is the moſt contented, and yet the leaſt ſatisfied: he is contented with a morſel of bread, and a little water in the cruiſe, yet never ſatisfied with grace; he doth pant and breathe after more. This is his prayer—"Lord, more conformity to Chriſt, more communion with Chriſt." He would fain have Chriſt's image more lively pictured upon his ſoul. True grace is always progreſſive: as the ſaints are called *lamps* and *ſtars* in regard of their *light*, ſo *trees of righteouſneſs*, (Iſai. lxi. 3.) for their growth; they are indeed like the tree of life, bringing forth ſeveral ſorts of fruit.

A true Chriſtian grows, 1. *in beauty*. Grace is the beſt complexion of the ſoul: it is at the firſt plantation like Rachel, fair to look upon; but ſtill, the more it lives, the more it ſends forth it's rays of beauty. Abraham's faith was at firſt beautiful; but at laſt it did ſhine in it's orient colours, and grew ſo illuſtrious, that God himſelf was in love with it, and makes his faith a pattern to all believers.

2. A true Chriſtian grows in ſweetneſs. A poiſonous weed may grow as much as the hyſop, or roſemary; the poppy in the field,

as the corn; the crab, as the pearmain: but the one hath a harſh, ſour taſte; the other mellows as it grows. An hypocrite may grow in outward dimenſions as much as a child of God, he may pray as much, profeſs as much; but he grows only in magnitude, he brings forth ſour grapes, his duties are leavened with pride; the other ripens as he grows: he grows in love, humility, faith, which do mellow and ſweeten his duties, and make them come off with a better reliſh. The believer grows as a flower; he caſts a fragrancy and perfume.

3. A true Chriſtian grows in *ſtrength*; he grows ſtill more *rooted* and *ſettled*. The more the tree grows, the more it ſpreads it's root in the earth, *Col.* ii. 7. A Chriſtian, who is a plant of the heavenly Jeruſalem, the longer he grows, the more he incorporates into Chriſt, and ſucks ſpiritual juice and ſap from him; he is a dwarf in regard of humility, but a giant in regard of ſtrength. He is ſtrong to do duties, to bear burdens, to reſiſt temptations.

4. He grows vigorous in the *exerciſe of his grace*; he hath not only oil in his lamps, but his lamps are burning and ſhining. Grace is agile and dexterous. Chriſt's vines do flouriſh; (*Cant.* vi. 11.) hence we read of a *lively hope*, (1 Pet. i. 3.) and a *fervent love*; (1 Pet. i. 22.) here is the activity of grace. Indeed, ſometimes grace is as a ſleepy habit in the ſoul, like ſap in the

the vine, not exerting it's vigour; which may be occaſioned through ſpiritual ſloth, or by reaſon of falling into ſome ſin; but this is only for a while: the *ſpring* of grace will come, the *flowers will appear*, and the *fig-tree put forth her green figs*. The freſh gales of the Spirit do ſweetly revive and refocillate grace. The Church of Chriſt, whoſe heart was a *garden*, and her graces as precious *ſpices*, prays for the heavenly breathings of the Spirit, that her ſacred ſpices might flow out, *Cant.* iv. 16.

5. A true Chriſtian grows both in the kind and in the degree of grace. To his ſpiritual *living* he gets an augmentation: he adds to *faith*, *virtue*; to *virtue*, *knowledge*; to *knowledge*, *temperance*, &c. 2 Pet. i. 5, 6. Here is grace growing in the *kind*; and he goes on *from faith to faith*; (Rom. i. 17.) there is grace growing in the *degree*. *We are bound to give thanks to God for you, brethren, becauſe your faith groweth exceedingly*, (2 Theſſ. xi.) it encreaſeth over and above. And the apoſtle ſpeaks of thoſe ſpiritual plants which were laden with Goſpel fruit, *Phil.* i. 11. A Chriſtian is compared to the *vine*—an emblem of fruitfulneſs—he muſt bear full cluſters: we are bid to *perfect* that which is *lacking in our faith*, 1 Theſ. iii. 10. A Chriſtian muſt never be ſo old as to be paſt bearing: he brings forth *fruit in his old age*, Pſal. xcii. 14. An heaven-born plant is ever growing: he

never thinks he grows enough; he is not content unleſs he add every day one cubit to his ſpiritual ſtature. We muſt not be content juſt with ſo much grace as will keep life and ſoul together; a drachm or two muſt not ſuffice, but we muſt be ſtill encreaſing *with the encreaſe of God*, Col. ii. 9. We had need *renew* our ſtrength as the *eagle*, Iſai. xl. 31. Our ſins are renewed, our wants are renewed, our temptations are renewed, and ſhall not our *ſtrength* be renewed? Oh, be not content with the firſt appearance of grace! grace in it's infancy and minority. You look for degrees of glory; be you Chriſtians of degrees. Though a believer ſhould be contented with a morſel in his eſtate, yet not with a morſel in religion. A Chriſtian of the right breed labours ſtill to excel himſelf, and come near unto that holineſs in God, who is the original, the pattern, and antitype, of all holineſs.

CHAP. XIII.

USE 4.

Shewing how a Chriſtian may know whether he hath learned this divine Art.

THUS having laid down theſe three Cautions, I proceed in the next place to an Uſe of Trial. 4. How may a Chriſtian

tian know that he hath learned this leſſon of contentment? I ſhall lay down ſome characters by which you ſhall know it—

1. A contented ſpirit is a *ſilent ſpirit*. He hath not one word to ſay againſt God. I was *dumb*, or *ſilent*, becauſe *thou, Lord, didſt it*, Pſal. xxxix. Contentment ſilenceth all diſpute—*He ſitteth alone, and keepeth ſilence*, Lam. iii. 28. There is a ſinful ſilence, when God is diſhonoured, his truth wounded, and men hold their peace: this ſilence is a loud ſin; and there is an *holy* ſilence, when the ſoul ſits down quiet and content with it's condition. When Samuel tells Eli that heavy meſſage from God, that he would *judge his houſe, and that the iniquity of his family ſhould not be purged away with ſacrifice for ever*, (1 Sam. iii. 13.) doth Eli murmur or diſpute? No; he hath not one word to ſay againſt God—*It is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him good*, verſe 18. A diſcontented ſpirit ſaith, as Pharaoh—"*Who is the Lord?* Why ſhould I ſuffer all this? Why ſhould I be brought into this low condition? *Who is the Lord?*" But a gracious heart ſaith, as Eli—"*It is the Lord*; let him do what he will with me." When Nadab and Abihu, the ſons of Aaron, had offered up *ſtrange fire*, and *fire went from the Lord, and devoured them*, (Lev. x. 1.) is Aaron now in a paſſion of diſcontent? No; *Aaron held his peace*, verſe 3. A contented ſpirit is never angry, unleſs with

with himſelf, for having hard thoughts of God. When Jonah ſaid, *I do well to be angry*; this was not a contented ſpirit, it did not become a prophet.

2. A contented ſpirit *is a chearful ſpirit*. Contentment is ſomething more than *patience*; for patience denotes only ſubmiſſion, contentment denotes *chearfulneſs*. A contented Chriſtian is more than paſſive; he doth not only *bear the croſs*, but *take up the croſs*, Matt. vi. 24. He looks upon God as a wiſe God; and, whatever he doth, it is in order to a cure: hence the contented Chriſtian is chearful; and, with the apoſtle, *takes pleaſure in infirmities, diſtreſſes, &c.* 2 Cor. xii. 10. He doth not only ſubmit to God's dealings, but rejoice in them; he doth not only ſay—"*Juſt is the Lord* in all that is befallen me;" but "*Good is the Lord.*" This is to be contented. A ſullen melancholy is hateful. It is ſaid, God loves a *chearful giver*, (2 Cor. ix. 7.) and God loves a *chearful liver*. We are bid, in Scripture, not to be *careful*; but we are no where bid not to be *chearful*. He that is contented with his condition, doth not abate of his ſpiritual joy; and, indeed, he hath that within him which is the ground of chearfulneſs; he carries a pardon ſealed in his heart, *Matt.* ix. 2.

3. A contented ſpirit is a *thankful ſpirit*, Job, i. 21. This is a degree above the other—*In every thing giving thanks*, 1 Theſ.

5. A

5. A gracious heart ſpies mercy in every condition, therefore hath his heart ſcrewed up to thankfulneſs: others will bleſs God for proſperity, he bleſſeth him for affliction. Thus he reaſons with himſelf—" Am I in want? God ſees it better for me to want, than to abound. God is now dieting of me, he ſees it better for my ſpiritual health ſometimes to be kept faſting:" therefore he doth not only ſubmit, but is thankful. Diſcontent is ever complaining of his condition; the contented ſpirit is ever giving thanks. Oh, what height of grace is this! A contented heart is a *temple*, where the praiſes of God are ſung forth; not a *ſepulchre*, wherein they are buried. A contented Chriſtian, in the greateſt ſtraits, hath his heart enlarged, and dilated in thankfulneſs. He oft contemplates God's love in election; he ſees that he is a *monument* of mercy, therefore deſires to be a *pattern* of praiſe. There is always gratulatory muſick in a contented ſoul: the Spirit of grace works in the heart like new wine; which, under the heavieſt preſſures of ſorrow, will have a vent open for thankfulneſs. This is to be content.

4. He that is content, no condition comes amiſs to him; ſo it is in the *text—In whatſoever ſtate I am in, &c.* A contented Chriſtian can turn himſelf to any thing, either want, or abound. The people of Iſrael knew neither how to abound, nor yet how

how to want; when they were in want, they murmured—*Can God prepare a table in the wilderneſs?* And when they eat and were filled, then they lifted up the heel. Paul knew how to manage every eſtate: he could be either a note higher, or lower; he was, in this ſenſe, an *univerſaliſt*; he could do any thing that God would have him. If he were in proſperity, he knew how to be thankful; if in adverſity, he knew how to be patient; he was neither lift up with the one, nor caſt down with the other. He could carry a greater ſail or leſſer: thus a contented Chriſtian knows how to turn himſelf to any condition. We have thoſe who can be contented in *ſome eſtate*, but not in every eſtate: they can be content in a wealthy eſtate, when they have the ſtreams of milk and honey; while God's candle ſhines upon their head, now they are content; but if the wind turn, and be againſt them, now they are diſcontented. While they have a ſilver crutch to lean upon, they are contented; but if God breaks this crutch, then they are diſcontented: but Paul had learned, in every ſtate, to carry himſelf with equanimity of mind. Others could be content with their affliction, ſo God would give them leave to pick and chuſe. They could be content to bear *ſuch* a croſs; they could better endure ſickneſs than poverty; or bear loſs of eſtate, than loſs of children: if they might have ſuch a man's

man's croſs, they could be content; any condition but the preſent. This is not to be content. A contented Chriſtian doth not go to chuſe his croſs, but leaves God to chuſe for him; he is content, both for the *kind* and for the *duration*. A contented ſpirit ſaith—"Let God apply what medicine he pleaſeth, and let it lie on as long as it will; I know, when it hath done it's cure, and eaten the venom of ſin out of my heart, God will take it off again." In a word, a contented Chriſtian, being ſweetly captivated under the authority of the Word, deſires to be wholly at God's diſpoſal, and is willing to live in that ſphere and climate where God has ſet him; and, if at any time there hath been an inſtrument of doing noble and brave ſervice in the publick, he knows he is but a *rational tool*, a ſervant to authority, and is content to return to his former private condition of life. Cincinnatus, after he had done worthily, and purchaſed to himſelf great fame in his dictatorſhip, did, notwithſtanding, afterwards voluntarily return to till and manure his four acres of ground. Thus ſhould it be with Chriſtians, profeſſing *godlineſs with contentment*. Having ſerved Mars, not daring to offend Jupiter; leſt otherwiſe they diſcover only to the world a *brutiſh valour*; being ſo untamed and headſtrong, that when they have conquered others, yet

yet they are not able to rule their own ſpirits.

5. He that is contented with his condition, to rid himſelf out of trouble, will not run himſelf into ſin. I deny not but a Chriſtian may lawfully ſeek to change his condition: ſo far as God's providence doth go before, he may follow; but when men will not follow providence, but run before it, as he ſaid—*This evil is of the Lord, why ſhould I wait any longer?* 2 Kings, vi. If God doth not open the door by his providence, they will break it open, and wind themſelves out of affliction by ſin, bringing their ſouls into trouble by bringing their eſtates out of trouble: this is far from holy contentment; this is unbelief broken out into rebellion. A contented Chriſtian is willing to wait God's leiſure, and will not ſtir till God open a door. As Paul ſaid in another caſe—*They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have caſt us into priſon; and now do they thruſt us out privily? Nay, verily, but let them come themſelves, and fetch us out*, Acts, xvi. 37. So, with reverence, ſaith the contented Chriſtian—"God hath caſt me into this condition; and, though it be ſad and troubleſome, yet I will not ſtir till God, by a clear providence, fetch me out." Thus thoſe brave-ſpirited Chriſtians, (*Heb.* xi. 35.) *accepted not deliverance*; that is, upon baſe, diſhonourable terms. They would rather

ſtay

ſtay in priſon, than purchaſe their liberty by carnal compliance. Eſtius obſerves on the place, They might not only have had their enlargement, but been raiſed to honour, and put into offices of truſt; yet the honour of religion was dearer to them than either liberty or honour. A contented Chriſtian will not remove, till, as the Iſraelites, he ſee a *pillar of cloud and fire* going before him—*It is good that a man ſhould both hope, and quietly wait, for the ſalvation of the Lord*, Lam. iii. 26. It is good to ſtay God's leiſure; and not to extricate ourſelves out of trouble, till we ſee the Star of God's providence pointing out a way to us.

CHAP. XIV.

USE 5.

Containing a Chriſtian Directory, or Rules about Contentment.

I Proceed now to an Uſe of Direction, to ſhew Chriſtians how they may attain to this *Divine Art* of Contentment. Certainly it is feaſible, others of God's ſaints have reached to it. St. Paul here had it; and what do we think of thoſe we read of in the little book of martyrs, (*Heb.* xi.) who had trials of *cruel mockings and ſcorchings*, who wandered about in *deſarts* and *caves*, yet

yet were contented? So that it is poſſible to be had. And here I ſhall lay down ſome Rules for Holy Contentment.

SECT. I.

RULE I.

Advancement of Faith is neceſſary.

ALL our diſquietneſs do iſſue immediately from unbelief. It is this that raiſeth the ſtorm of diſcontent in the heart. Oh, ſet faith at work! It is the property of faith to ſilence our doubtings, to ſcatter our fears, to ſtill the heart when the paſſions are up. Faith works the heart to a ſweet ſerene compoſure: it is not having *food* and *raiment*, but having *faith*, which will make us content. Faith chides down paſſion: when Reaſon begins to ſwim, let Faith ſwim.

QUEST. How doth faith work contentment?

ANSW. 1. Faith ſhews the ſoul, that whatever it's trials are, yet it is from the hand of a Father: it is indeed a bitter cup; but *ſhall I not drink the cup which my Father hath given me to drink?* It is love to my ſoul; God *corrects* with the ſame love he *crowns* me. God is now training me up for heaven; he carves me, to make me a *poliſhed*

poliſhed ſhaft. Theſe ſufferings bring forth patience, humility, even the *peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs*, Heb. xii. 11. And if God can bring ſuch ſweet fruit out of a ſour ſtock, let him graft me where he pleaſe. Thus faith brings the heart to holy contentment.

2. Faith ſucks the honey of contentment out of the hive of the Promiſe. Chriſt is the *Vine*; the promiſes are the cluſters of grapes that grow upon this Vine; and Faith preſſeth the ſweet wine of contentment out of theſe ſpiritual cluſters of the promiſes. I will ſhew you but one cluſter—*The Lord will give grace and glory:* (Pſal. lxxxiv. 11.) here is enough for faith to live upon. The Promiſe is the flower out of which Faith diſtils the ſpirits and quinteſſence of divine contentment. In a word, Faith carries up the ſoul, and makes it aſpire after more noble and generous delights than earth affords, and to live *in* the world *above* the world. Would you lead contented lives, live up to the ~~height~~ of your faith.

SECT.

SECT. II.

RULE 2.

Breathe after Aſſurance.

OH, let us get the intereſt cleared between God and our own ſouls! *Intereſt* is a word much in uſe; a pleaſing word: intereſt in great friends, intereſt-money. Oh, if there be an *intereſt* worth looking after, it is an intereſt between God and the ſoul. Labour to ſay—*My God.* To be without money and without friends, and without God too, (*Eph.* ii. 12.) is ſad; but he whoſe faith doth flouriſh into aſſurance, that can ſay—*I know in whom I have believed,* (2 Tim. i. 12.) —as St. Paul—that man hath enough to give his heart contentment. When a man's debts are paid, and he can go abroad without fear of arreſting, what contentment is this! Oh, let your title be cleared! if God be ours, whatever we want in the creature is infinitely made up in him. Do I want bread? I have Chriſt, the Bread of Life. Am I under defilement? His blood is like the trees of the ſanctuary; not only for meat, but medicine, *Ezek.* xlvii. 12. If any thing in the world is worth labouring for, it is to get ſound evidences that God is ours. If this

this be once cleared, what can come amiſs? No matter what ſtorms I meet with, ſo that I know where to put in for harbour. He that hath God to be his God, is ſo well contented with his condition, that he doth not much care whether he hath any thing elſe. To reſt in a condition where a Chriſtian cannot ſay God is his God, is matter of *fear:* and if he can ſay ſo truly, and yet is not contented, is matter of *ſhame*. David *encouraged himſelf in the Lord his God.* It was ſad with him, (1 *Sam.* xxx.) Ziklag burnt, his wives taken captive, he loſt all, and like to have loſt his ſoldier's hearts too—for they *ſpake of ſtoning him*—yet he had the ground of contentment within him, viz. *an intereſt in God*; and this was a pillar of ſupportment to his ſpirit. He that knows *God is his*, and all that is in God is *for his good*; if this doth not ſatisfy, I know nothing will.

SECT. III.

RULE 3.

Pray for an humble Spirit.

THE humble man is the contented man: if his eſtate be low, his heart is lower than his eſtate; therefore he is contented. If his eſteem in the world be low, he that is little in his own eyes will not

not be much troubled to be little in the eyes of others. He hath a meaner opinion of himſelf, than others can have of him. The humble man ſtudies his own unworthineſs; he looks upon himſelf as *leſs than the leaſt* of God's mercies, (*Gen.* xxxii. 10.) and then a *little* will content him. He cries out with Paul, that he is *the chief of ſinners*, (1 Tim. i. 15.) therefore doth not murmur, but admire: he doth not ſay his comforts are ſmall, but his ſins are great. He thinks it a mercy he is out of hell; therefore is contented. He doth not go to carve out a more happy condition to himſelf; he knows, the worſt piece God cuts him is better than he deſerves. A proud man is never contented: he is one that hath an high opinion of himſelf; therefore, under ſmall bleſſings is diſdainful, under ſmall croſſes impatient. The humble ſpirit is the contented ſpirit; if his croſs be light, he reckons it in the inventory of his mercies; if it be heavy, yet takes it upon his knees, knowing that when his eſtate is bad, it is to make him the better. Where you lay Humility for the foundation, Contentment will be the ſuperſtructure.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

RULE 4.

Keep a clear Conſcience, 1 Tim. iii. 9.

CONTENTMENT is the *manna* that is laid up in the *ark* of a good conſcience. Oh, take heed of indulging any ſin! It is as natural for guilt to breed diſquietude, as for putrid matter to breed vermin. Sin lies like Jonah in the ſhip, it raiſes a tempeſt. If duſt or motes be gotten into the eye, they make the eye water, and cauſe a ſoreneſs in it: if the eye be clear, then it is free from that ſoreneſs. If ſin be gotten into the conſcience, which is as the eye of the ſoul, then grief and diſquiet breed there: but keep the eye of conſcience clear, and all is well. What Solomon ſaith of a good ſtomach, I may ſay of *a good conſcience*, (Prov. xxvii. 7.) *To the hungry ſoul every bitter thing is ſweet*; ſo to a good conſcience every bitter thing is ſweet; it can pick contentment out of the *Croſs*. Good conſcience turns the waters of Marah into wine. Would you have a quiet heart? Get a ſmiling conſcience. I wonder not to hear Paul ſay, he was in every ſtate content; when he could make that triumph—*I have lived in all good conſcience unto this*

day, Acts, xiii. 4. When once a man's reckonings are clear, it muſt needs let in abundance of contentment into the heart. Good conſcience can ſuck contentment out of the bittereſt drug: under ſlanders—*This is our rejoicing, the teſtimony of our conſcience*, 2 Cor. i. 12. In caſe of impriſonment, Paul had his priſon-ſongs, and could play the ſweet leſſon of contentment when his feet were in the ſtocks, *Acts*, xvi. 25. Auguſtine calls it the paradiſe of a good conſcience; and, if it be ſo, then in priſon we may be in paradiſe. When the times are troubleſome, a good conſcience makes a calm: if conſcience be clear, what though the days be cloudy? Is it not a contentment to have a friend always by to ſpeak a good word for us? Such a friend is Conſcience. Good conſcience, as David's *harp*, drives away the evil ſpirit of diſcontent. When thoughts begin to ariſe, and the heart is diſquieted, Conſcience ſaith to a man, as the King did to Nehemiah—*Why is thy countenance ſad?* Nehm. ii. 2. So ſaith Conſcience—"Haſt not thou the *ſeed of God in thee?* Art not thou an *heir of the Promiſe?* Haſt not thou a treaſure that thou canſt never be plundered of? Why is thy countenance ſad?" Oh, keep conſcience clear, and you ſhall never want contentment! For a man to keep the *pipes* of his body, the veins and arteries, free from colds and obſtructions, is the beſt way

way to maintain health; ſo, to keep conſcience clear, and to preſerve it from the obſtructions of guilt, is the beſt way to maintain contentment. Firſt, conſcience is pure, and then peaceable.

SECT. V.

RULE 5.

Learn to deny yourſelves.

LOOK well to your affections, bridle them in. Do two things—

1. Mortify your deſires.
2. Moderate your delights.

1. *Mortify your deſires.* We muſt not be of the Dragon's temper, who, they ſay, is ſo thirſty, that no water will quench his thirſt—*Mortify, therefore, your inordinate affection,* Col. iii. 5. In the Greek, it is, your *evil affection*; to ſhew that our deſires, when they are inordinate, are *evil.* Crucify your deſires, be as dead men: a dead man hath no appetite.

QUEST. How ſhould a Chriſtian martyr his deſires?

ANSW. 1. Get a right judgment of the things here below: they are mean, beggarly things—*Wilt thou ſet thine eyes upon that*

which is not? Prov. xxiii. 5. Thy appetite muſt be guided by reaſon: the affections are the feet of the ſoul; therefore they muſt *follow* the judgment, not *lead* it.

2. Often ſeriouſly meditate of mortality. Death will ſoon crop thoſe flowers which we delight in, and pull down the fabrick of thoſe bodies which we ſo garniſh and beautify. Think, when you are locking up your money in your cheſt, who ſhall ſhortly lock you up in your coffin.

2. *Moderate your delights.* Set not your hearts too much upon any creature, *Pſal.* lxii. 20. What we over-love, we ſhall over-grieve. Rachel ſet her heart too much upon her children; and, when ſhe had loſt them, ſhe loſt herſelf too: ſuch a vein of grief was opened as could not be ſtenched—*She refuſed to be comforted.* Here was diſcontent. When we let any creature lie too near our heart, when God pulls away that comfort, a piece of our heart is rent away with it. Too much fondneſs ends in frowardneſs. Thoſe that would be content in the want of mercy, muſt be moderate in the enjoyment. Jonathan dipped the rod in honey, he did not truſt in it. Let us take heed of engulphing ourſelves in pleaſure: better have a ſpare diet, than, by having too much, to ſurfeit.

SECT.

SECT. VI.

RULE 6.

Pray for a Foretaſte of Heaven in your Heart.

SPIRITUAL things ſatisfy; the more of heaven is in us, the leſs earth will content. He that hath once taſted the love of God, his thirſt is much quenched towards ſublunary things: the joys of God's Spirit are heart-filling and heart-chearing joys; he that hath theſe, hath heaven begun in him, (*Rom.* xiv. 17.) and ſhall we not be content to be in heaven?—*Seek the things that are above*; (Col iii. 1.) fly aloft in your affections, thirſt after the graces and comforts of the Spirit. The eagle, that flies above in the air, fears not the ſtinging of the ſerpent; the ſerpent creeps on his belly, and ſtings only ſuch creatures as go upon the earth.

Diſcontent is a ſerpent that ſtings only an earthly heart. An heavenly ſoul, that with the eagle flies aloft, finds abundantly enough in God to give contentment, and is not ſtung with the cares and diſquiets of the world.

SECT. VII.

RULE 7.

Look not ſo much on the dark Side of your Condition, as on the light.

GOD doth chequer his providences, white and black, as the pillar of cloud had it's light ſide and dark. Look on the light ſide of thy eſtate; who looks on the back ſide of a landſcape? Suppoſe thou art caſt in a law-ſuit, there is the *dark ſide*; yet thou haſt ſome land left, there is the *light ſide*. Thou haſt ſickneſs in thy body, there is the *dark ſide*; but grace in thy ſoul, there is the *light ſide*. Thou haſt a child taken away, there is the *dark-ſide*; thy huſband lives, there is the *light ſide*. God's providences in this life are various, repreſented by thoſe ſpeckled horſes among the myrtle-trees, which were the *red* and *white*, Zach. i. 8. Mercies and afflictions are interwoven: God doth ſpeckle his work. "Oh!" ſaith one, "I want ſuch a comfort;" but weigh all thy mercies in the balance, and that will make thee content. If a man did want a finger, would he be ſo diſcontented for the loſs of that, as not to be thankful for all the other parts and joints of the body? Look on the *light ſide* of your

your condition, and then all your diſcontents will eaſily diſband: do not pore upon your loſſes, but ponder upon your mercies. What! wouldſt thou have no croſs at all? Why ſhould one man think to have all good things, when himſelf is good but in part? Wouldſt thou have no evil about thee, who haſt ſo much evil in thee? Thou art not fully ſanctified in this life; how then thinkeſt thou to be fully ſatisfied? Never look for perfection of contentment till there be perfection of grace.

SECT. VIII.

RULE 8.

Conſider in what a Poſture we ſtand here in the World.

1. WE are in a *military* condition, we are ſoldiers; (2 *Tim.* ii. 3.) now a ſoldier is content with any thing. What, though he hath not his ſtately houſe, his rich furniture, his ſoft bed, his full table, yet he doth not complain; he can lie on ſtraw as well as on down; he minds not his lodging: but his thoughts run upon dividing the ſpoil, and the garland of honour that ſhall be ſet upon his head; and, for the hope of this, is content to run any hazard, endure any hardſhip. Were it not abſurd to

hear him complain that he wants ſuch proviſion, and is fain to lie out in the fields? A Chriſtian is a *military perſon*; he fights the Lord's battles, he is Chriſt's enſign-bearer. Now, what though he endures hard fare, and the bullets fly about? He fights for a crown, and therefore muſt be content.

2. We are pilgrims and travellers. A man that is in a ſtrange country is contented with any diet or uſage; he is glad of any thing: though he hath not that reſpect or attendance as he looks for at home, nor is capable of the privileges and immunities of that place, he is content; he knows, when he comes into his own country, he hath lands to inherit, and there he ſhall have honour and reſpect. So it is with a child of God; he is in a pilgrim condition—*I am a ſtranger with thee, and a ſojourner, as all my fathers were*, Pſal. xxxix. 12. Therefore, let a Chriſtian be content: he is in the world, but not of the world; he is born of God, and is a citizen of the New Jeruſalem; (*Heb.* xii. 10.) therefore, though *he hunger and thirſt, and have no certain dwelling-place*, (1 Cor. iv. 11.) yet he muſt be content; it will be better when he comes into his own country.

3. We are beggars; we beg at heaven's gate—*Give us this day our daily bread.* We live upon God's alms; therefore muſt be content

tent with any thing. A beggar muſt not pick and chuſe, he is contented with the refuſe. Oh! why doſt thou murmur that art a beggar, and art fed out of the alms-baſket of God's providence?

SECT. IX.

RULE 9.

Let not your Hopes depend upon outward Things.

LEAN not upon ſandy pillars. We oft build our comforts upon ſuch a friend or eſtate, and when that prop is removed, all our joy is gone, and our hearts begin either to *fail* or *fret*. A lame man leans on his crutches; and, if they *break*, he is undone. Let not thy contentment go upon crutches, which may ſoon fail; the ground of contentment muſt be within thyſelf. The word, in the Greek, which is uſed for *contentment*, ſignifies *ſelf-ſufficiency*. A Chriſtian hath that from within that is able to ſupport him, that ſtrength of faith and *good hope through grace*, as bears up his heart in the deficiency of outward comforts. The philoſophers of old, when their eſtates were gone, yet could take contentment in the goods of the mind, their learning and virtue; and ſhall not a believer much more in

the grace of the Spirit, that rich enamel and embroidery of the ſoul? Say, with thyſelf—"If friends leave me, if riches take wings, yet I have that within comforts me, *viz.* a heavenly treaſure; when the bloſſoms of my eſtate are blown off, ſtill there is the ſap of contentment in the root of my heart; I have ſtill an intereſt in God, and that intereſt cannot be broken off." Oh! never place your felicity in theſe dull and beggarly things here below.

SECT. X.

RULE 10.

Let us often compare our Condition.

QUEST.

HOW ſhall I compare?

ANSW. Make this five-fold compariſon.

1. Let us compare our condition and our deſert together; if we have not what we deſire, we have more than we deſerve. For our *mercies*, we have deſerved *leſs*; for our afflictions, we have deſerved *more*.

Firſt, In regard of our *mercies*, we have deſerved leſs. What can we deſerve?—*Can man be profitable to the Almighty?* We live upon free-grace. Alexander gave a great gift

gift to one of his ſubjects. The man, being much taken with it—"This," ſaith he, "is more than I am worthy of!"—"I do not give thee this," ſaith the King, "becauſe thou art worthy of it, but I give a gift like Alexander." Whatever we have is not *merit*, but *bounty*; the leaſt bit of bread is more than God owes us; we can bring faggots to our own burning, but not one flower to the garland of our ſalvation: he that hath the leaſt mercy will die in God's debt.

Secondly, In regard of our *afflictions*, we have deſerved more. *Thou haſt puniſhed us leſs than our iniquities deſerve*, Ezra, ix. 13. Is our condition ſad? We have deſerved it ſhould be worſe. Hath God taken away our eſtate from us? He might have taken away Chriſt from us. Hath he thrown us into priſon? He might have thrown us into hell. He might as well damn us as whip us. This ſhould make us contented.

2. Let us compare our condition with others, and this will make us content. We look at them who are above us; let us look at them who are below us. We ſee one in his ſilks, another in his ſack-cloth; one hath the waters of a full cup wrung out to him, another is mingling his drink with tears. How many pale faces do we behold, whom not ſickneſs, but want, hath brought into a conſumption! Think of this,

and be content. It is worſe with them, who perhaps deſerve better than we, and are higher in God's favour. Am I in priſon? Was not Daniel in a worſe place, *viz.* the lion's den? Do I live in a mean cottage? Look on them who are baniſhed from their houſes. We read of the primitive ſaints, *that they wandered up and down in ſheep-ſkins and goat-ſkins, of whom the world was not worthy*, Heb. xi. 27. Haſt thou a gentle fit of an ague? Look on them who are tormented with the ſtone and gout, &c. Others of God's children have had greater afflictions, and have borne them better than we. Daniel fed upon pulſe, and drank water, yet was fairer than they who are of the King's portion, *Dan.* i. 16. Some Chriſtians, who have been in a lower condition, that have fed upon pulſe and water, have looked better; *viz.* been more patient and contented than we who enjoy abundance. Do others rejoice in affliction, and do we repine? Can they take up their croſs, and walk chearfully under it? And do we, under a lighter croſs, murmur?

3. Let us compare our condition with Chriſt's upon earth. What a poor, mean condition, was he pleaſed to be in for us? He was contented with any thing. *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that, though he was rich, yet, for your ſakes, he became poor*, 2 Cor. viii. 9. He could have brought down an houſe from heaven with him,

him, or challenged the high places of the earth; but he was contented to be in the *wine-preſs*, that we might be in the *wine-cellar*; and to live poor, that we might die rich. The manger was his cradle, the cob-webs his canopy; he, who is now preparing manſions for us in heaven, had none for himſelf on earth, *he had no where to lay his head.* Chriſt came in the form of a beggar; who, *being in the form of God, took upon him the form of a ſervant*, Phil. ii. 7. We read not of any ſums of money he had; when he wanted money, he was fain to work a miracle for it, *Matt.* xvii. 27. Jeſus Chriſt was in a low condition; he was never high, but when he was lifted up upon the croſs, and that was his humility; he was content to live poor, and die curſed. Oh, compare your condition with Chriſt's!

4. Let us compare our condition with what it was once, and this will make us content.

Firſt, Let us compare our *ſpiritual eſtate* with what it was once. What were we when we lay in our blood? We were heirs apparent to hell, having no right to pluck one leaf from the Tree of the Promiſe; it was a *Chriſtleſs* and *hopeleſs* condition, *Eph.* ii. 12. But now God hath cut off the entail of hell and damnation; he hath taken you out of the wild olive of nature, and engrafted you into Chriſt, making you living branches of that living Vine; he hath not

not only cauſed the light to ſhine *upon* you, but *into* you, (2 *Cor.* iv. 6.) and hath intereſted you in all the privileges of ſonſhip. Is not here that may make the ſoul content?

Secondly, Let us compare our *temporal eſtate* with what it was once. Alas! we had nothing when we ſtepped out of the womb—*For we brought nothing with us into the world*, 1 Tim. vi. 7. If we have not that which we deſire, we have more than we did bring with us; we brought nothing with us *but ſin*. Other creatures bring ſomething with them into the world; the lamb brings wool, the ſilk-worm ſilk, &c. but we brought nothing with us. What, if our condition at preſent be low? It is better than it was once; therefore, having food and raiment, let us be content. Whatever we have, God's providence fetched it into us; and, if we loſe all, yet we have as much as we brought with us. This was that which made Job content—*Naked came I out of my mother's womb*; (Job, i. 21.) as if he had ſaid—"Though God hath taken away all from me, yet why ſhould I murmur? I am as rich now as I was when I came into the world; I have as much left as I brought with me: naked came I hither; therefore, bleſſed be the name of the Lord."

5. Let us compare our condition with what it ſhall be ſhortly. There is a time

ſhortly

ſhortly coming, when, if we had all the riches of India, they would do us no good: we muſt die, and can carry nothing with us. So ſaith the apoſtle—"*It is certain we can carry nothing out of the world*;" (1 Tim. v. 7.) therefore it follows—"*Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content*," verſe 8. Open the rich man's grave, and ſee what is there; you may find the *miſer's* bones, but not his riches: were we to live for ever here, or could we carry our riches into another world, then indeed we might be diſcontented, when we look upon our empty bags. But it is not ſo: God may preſently ſeal a warrant for death to apprehend us; and, when we die, we cannot carry our eſtate with us. Honour and riches deſcend not into the grave, why then are we troubled at our outward condition? Why do we diſguiſe ourſelves with diſcontent? Oh! lay up a ſtock of grace, be rich in faith and good works, theſe *riches will follow us*, Rev. xiv. 13. No other coin but grace will paſs current in heaven; ſilver and gold will not go there. Labour to *be rich towards God*; and, as for other things, be not ſolicitous—*We ſhall carry nothing with us*, Luke, xii. 21.

SECT.

SECT. XI.

RULE 11.

Do not bring your Condition to your Mind, but bring your Mind to your Condition.

THE way for a Chriſtian to be contented is, not by raiſing his eſtate higher, but by bringing his ſpirit lower; not by making his barns wider, but his heart narrower. One man a whole lordſhip or manor will not content; another is ſatisfied with a few acres of land: What is the difference? The one ſtudies to ſatisfy curioſity, the other neceſſity; the one thinks what he may *have*, the other thinks what he may *ſpare*.

SECT. XII.

RULE 12.

Study the Vanity of the Creature.

IT matters not whether we have more or leſs of theſe things; they have vanity written upon the frontiſpiece of them. The world is like a *ſhadow that declineth:* it is delightful, but deceitful; it promiſeth us more than we find, and it fails us when we

we have moſt need of it. All the world rings changes, and is conſtant only in it's diſappointments: what, then, if we have leſs of that which is at beſt but voluble and fluid? The world is as full of *mutation* as *motion*; and, what if God cuts us ſhort in ſublunaries? The more a man hath to do with the world, the more he hath to do with vanity. The world may be compared to ice, which is ſmooth, but ſlippery; or to the Egyptian temples, without very beautiful and ſumptuous; but within, nothing to be ſeen but the image of an ape. Every creature ſaith, concerning ſatisfaction, *It is not in me.* The world is not a filling, but a flying, comfort. It is like a game at tennis: Providence bandies her golden balls, firſt to one, and then to another. Why are we diſcontented at the loſs of theſe things, but becauſe we expect that from them which is not, and repoſe that in them which we ought not? *Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd*, Jon. iv. 6. What a vanity was it? Is it much to ſee a withering gourd ſmitten? or, to ſee the moon dreſſing itſelf in a new ſhape and figure?

SECT.

SECT. XIII.

RULE 13.

Get Fancy regulated.

IT is the fancy which raiſeth the price of things above their real worth. What is the reaſon one tulip is worth five pounds, another, perhaps, not worth one ſhilling? Fancy raiſeth the price; the difference is rather imaginary than real: ſo, why it ſhould be better to have thouſands than hundreds is, becauſe men fancy it ſo. If we could fancy a lower condition better, as having leſs care in it, and leſs account, it would be far more eligible. The water, that ſprings out of the rock, drinks as ſweet as if it came out of a golden chalice: things are as we fancy them. Ever ſince the Fall, the fancy is diſtempered—*God ſaw that the imagination of the thoughts of his heart were evil*, Gen. vi. 5. Fancy looks through wrong ſpectacles; pray that God will ſanctify your fancy: a lower condition would content, if the mind and fancy were ſet right. Diogenes preferred his cynical life before Alexander's royalty: he fancied his little cloiſter beſt. Fabricius, a poor man, yet deſpiſed the gold of King Pyrrhus.

Could we cure a diſtempered fancy, we might ſoon conquer a diſcontented heart.

SECT

SECT. XIV.

RULE 14.

Conſider how little will ſuffice Nature.

THE body is but a ſmall continent, and is eaſily recruited. Chriſt hath taught us to pray *for our daily bread.* Nature is content with a little. "Not to thirſt, nor to ſtarve, is enough," ſaith Gregory Nazianzen.—"Meat and drink are a Chriſtian's riches," ſaith St. Hierom. And the Apoſtle ſaith—"*Having food and raiment, let us be content.*"

The ſtomach is ſooner filled than the eye. How quickly would a man be content, if he would ſtudy rather to ſatisfy his *hunger* than his *humour!*

SECT. XV.

RULE 15.

Conſider, that the preſent Condition is beſt for us, becauſe it is the Appointment of God.

FLESH and blood is not a competent judge. Surfeited ſtomachs are for banqueting ſtuff; but a man, that regards his health, is rather for ſolid food. Vain men fancy ſuch a condition beſt, and would flouriſh in their bravery; whereas a wiſe Chriſtian

tian hath his will melted into God's will, and thinks it beſt to be at his finding. God is wiſe: he knows whether we need food or phyſick; and, if we could acquieſce in Providence, the quarrel would ſoon be at an end. Oh, what a ſtrange creature would man be, if he were what he could wiſh himſelf! Be content to be at God's allowance; God knows which is the fitteſt paſture to put his ſheep in: ſometimes a more barren ground doth well; whereas rank paſture may rot. Do I meet with ſuch a croſs? God ſhews me what the world is: he hath no better way to wean me, than by putting me to a ſtep-mother. Doth God ſtint me in my allowance? He is now dieting me. Do I meet with loſs? It is that God may keep me from being loſt. Every croſs wind ſhall, at laſt, blow me to the right port. Did we believe that condition beſt which God doth parcel out to us, we ſhould chearfully ſubmit, and ſay—*The lines are fallen in pleaſant places.*

SECT. XVI.

RULE 16.

Do not too much indulge the Fleſh.

WE have taken an oath in baptiſm to *forſake the fleſh.* The Fleſh is a worſe enemy than the Devil; it is a *boſom traitor:*

traitor: an enemy within is worſe. If there were no Devil to tempt, the Fleſh would be another Eve to tempt to the *forbidden fruit*. Oh, take heed of giving way to it! Whence is all our diſcontent, but from the fleſhly part? The fleſh puts us upon the immoderate purſuit of the world; it conſults for eaſe and plenty; and, if it be not ſatisfied, then diſcontents begin to ariſe. Oh, let it not have the reins! Martyr the fleſh. In ſpiritual things, the fleſh is a *ſluggard*; in ſecular things, an *horſeleech*, crying—"Give, give." The fleſh is an enemy to ſuffering; it will ſooner make a man a *courtier* than a *martyr*. Oh, keep it under! Put it's neck under Chriſt's yoke: ſtretch and nail it to his croſs: never let a Chriſtian look for *contentment* in his ſpirit, till there be *confinement* in his fleſh.

SECT. XVII.

RULE 17.

Meditate much on the Glory which ſhall be Revealed.

THERE are great things laid up in heaven. Though it be ſad for the preſent, yet let us be content in that it will ſhortly be better; it is but a while, and we ſhall be with Chriſt, bathing our ſouls in the fountain of his love: we ſhall never complain of wants or injuries any more; our croſs

croſs may be heavy, but one ſight of Chriſt will make us forget all our former ſorrows. There are two things ſhould give contentment—

1. That God will make us able to bear our troubles, 1 *Cor.* x. 13. "God," ſaith Chryſoſtom, "doth like a lutaniſt, who will not let the ſtrings of his lute be too ſlack, leſt it ſpoil the muſick; nor will he ſuffer them to be too hard ſtretched or ſcrewed up, leſt they break." So doth God deal with us: he will not let us have too much proſperity, leſt this ſpoil the muſick of prayer and repentance; nor yet too much adverſity, leſt the Spirit *fail before me*, and the ſouls *which he hath made*, Iſai. lvii. 16.

2. When we have ſuffered a *while*, (1 Pet. v. 1.) we ſhall be perfected in glory; the croſs ſhall be our ladder, by which we ſhall climb up to heaven. Be then content, and the ſcene will alter. God will, ere long, turn our water into wine: the hope of this is enough to drive away all diſtempers from *the heart*. Bleſſed be God, it will be better—*We have no continuing city here*, (Heb. xix.) therefore our afflictions cannot continue. A wiſe man looks ſtill to *the end*—*The end of the juſt man is peace*, Pſal. xxxvii. 37. Methinks the ſmoothneſs of the end ſhould make amends for the ruggedneſs of the way. O eternity! eternity! think often of the *Kingdom prepared*. David was advanced from the field to the throne. Firſt, he held his *ſhepherd's ſtaff*;

ſtaff; and, ſhortly after, the *royal ſceptre*. God's people may be put to hard ſervices here; but God hath choſen them to be *kings*, to ſit upon the throne with the Lord Jeſus. This, being weighed in the balance of Faith, would be an excellent means to bring the heart to contentment.

SECT. XVIII.

RULE 18.

Be much in Prayer.

THE laſt Rule for contentment is—*Be much in Prayer*. Beg of God, that he will work our hearts to this bleſſed frame. *Is any man afflicted? let him pray*, Jam. v. 13. So, is any man diſcontented? let him pray. Prayer gives vent. The opening of a vein lets out the bad blood: when the heart is filled with ſorrow and diſquiet, prayer lets ou tthe bad blood. The key of Prayer, oiled with tears, unlocks the heart of all it's diſcontents. Prayer is an holy ſpell or charm, to drive away trouble; prayer is the unboſoming of the ſoul, the unloading of all our cares in God's breaſt; and this uſhers in ſweet contentment. When there is any burden upon our ſpirits, by opening our mind to a friend, we find our heart finely eaſed and quieted. It is not our *ſtrong reſolutions*, but our *ſtrong requeſts*, to God, which muſt give the heart eaſe

eaſe in trouble. By prayer, the ſtrength of Chriſt is brought into the ſoul; and where that is, a man is able to go through any condition. Paul could be in every ſtate content: but, that you may not think he was able to do this of himſelf, he tells you, that though he could want and abound, and *do all things*, yet it was *through Chriſt ſtrengthening him*, Phil. iv. 13. It is the child that writes, but it is the ſcrivener guides his hand. St. Paul arrived at the hardeſt duty in religion, viz. *contentment*; but the Spirit was his *pilot*, and Chriſt his *ſtrength*; and this ſtrength was uſhered in by holy prayer. Prayer is a powerful orator. Prayer is an *orator* with God, and an *exorciſt* againſt ſin. The beſt way is to pray down diſcontent. What Luther ſaith of *concupiſcence*, I may ſay of *diſcontent*; prayer is a ſacred leech, to ſuck out the venom and ſwelling of this paſſion. Prayer compoſeth the heart, and brings it into tune. Hath God deprived you of many comforts? Bleſs God that he left you the ſpirit of prayer.

CHAP. XV.

USE 6.

Comfort to the contented Chriſtian.

THE laſt Uſe is of comfort, or an encouraging word to the contented Chriſtian. If there be an heaven upon earth,

earth, thou haſt it. O Chriſtian! thou mayeſt inſult over thy troubles; and, with the Leviathan, laugh at the ſhaking of a ſpear, *Job*, xli. 29. What ſhall I ſay? Thou art a crown to thy profeſſion; thou doſt hold it out to all the world, that there is virtue enough in religion to give the ſoul contentment. Thou ſheweſt height of grace. When grace is *crowning*, it is not ſo much for us to be content; but when grace is *conflicting*, and meets with croſſes, temptations, agonies, now to be content—this is a glorious thing indeed!

To a contented Chriſtian I ſhall ſay two things for a farewel—

Firſt, God is exceedingly taken with ſuch a frame of heart. God ſaith of a contentented Chriſtian, as David once ſaid of Goliah's ſword—*There is none like that; give it me*, 1 Sam. xxi. 9. If you would pleaſe God, and be *men of his heart*, be contented. It is ſaid, that Rebecca made Iſaac ſavoury meat, ſuch as her huſband loved; would you give God *ſuch a diſh as he loves*, bring him this of contentment. The muſician hath many leſſons to play; but he hath one above all the reſt: there are many leſſons of holy muſick that delight God; the leſſon of repentance, humility, &c. But this leſſon of contentment is the ſweeteſt leſſon that a believer can play. God hates a forward ſpirit.

Secondly, The contented Chriſtian ſhall be no loſer. What loſt Job by his pa-

tience? God gave him three times as much as he had before. What loſt Abraham by his contentment? He was content to leave his country at God's call; the Lord makes a covenant with him, that he would be *his God*, Gen. xvii. He changeth his name; no more Abram, but Abraham, the Father of many nations. God makes his ſeed as the ſtars of heaven; nay, honours him with this title—*The Father of the Faithful*, Gen. xviii. 17. The Lord makes known his ſecrets to him—*Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I will do?* God ſettles a rich inheritance upon him; that land which was a type of heaven, and afterwards tranſlated him into the bleſſed Paradiſe. God will be ſure to reward the contented Chriſtian. As our Saviour ſaid in another caſe to Nathaniel—*Becauſe I ſaid I ſaw thee under the fig-tree, believeſt thou? Thou ſhalt ſee greater things than theſe*, John, i. 50. So I ſay—Art thou contented, O Chriſtian! with a little? Thou ſhalt ſee greater things than theſe: God will diſtill the ſweet influences of his love into thy ſoul; he will raiſe thee up friends; he will bleſs the oil in the cruiſe; and, when that is done, he will crown thee with an eternal enjoyment of himſelf; he will give thee heaven, where thou ſhalt have as much contentment as thy ſoul can poſſibly thirſt after.

FINIS.

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